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FROM CANA TO BETHANY



REV. F. WHITFIELD, M.A.



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FROM CANA TO BETHANY.

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FROM CANA TO BETHANY;

OR,

Gleanings from our Lord's Life
on Earth.

BY

REV. FREDERICK WHITFIELD, M.A.

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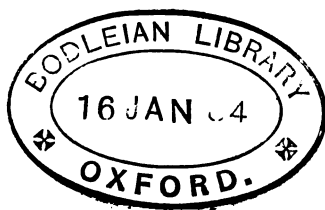
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PREFACE.



THE present volume is a selection from some of my former works, which have been for some time out of print. They are sent forth in a cheaper form, with the object of reaching many into whose hands they have never yet fallen, and on a more extensive scale. God has already blessed them, and my earnest desire and prayer is, that in the present form they may be blessed still more largely. May He use them for His glory—the only aim I have in sending them forth.

FREDERICK WHITFIELD.

ST. MARY'S, HASTINGS,
March, 1883.

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FROM CANA TO BETHANY.



I.

JESUS AT THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

JOHN ii. 1-11.

AFTER the interesting interview between the Saviour and Nathanael, recorded at the close of the chapter previous to that on which we are entering, we find Him pursuing His journey to Galilee. He takes up His temporary abode at the small village of Cana. While there, He and His disciples receive an invitation to a wedding. From the part taken in it by the Virgin, we are led to suppose that it was the marriage of a near kinsman. There are points in this interesting narrative which we may find instructive to our souls, and profitable for us to know. May the Holy Spirit be our guide as we endeavour to unfold them, and may the Sa-

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viour's name be magnified and exalted in our affections!

Having received the invitation, He hesitates not to accept it, and His disciples also; for where He goes they may follow, whether to the grave of Lazarus or to the joyous wedding feast. He came not to disturb the social arrangements of human life, nor to mar its domestic joys. He is there only to sanctify them; and where Jesus is the invited guest, all sounds of frivolity and mirth are hushed. True religion is nature subdued and sanctified, and turned by the Spirit of God into the original channel from which sin had diverted it. In this beautiful picture we may see a type, not only of what all our marriage feasts should be, but of what all our earthly pleasures and endearments and joys should be. Jesus should ever be the invited guest. He should be the indispensable One, and from beginning to end be what He was at this feast—the conspicuous One. Where this is the case, there will be a similar result—entire satisfaction, full enjoyment. The “good wine” that He supplied, and He only, excelled that which came from other sources,—perfect type of that true pleasure and enjoyment which He only can give, and which alone is truly satisfying.

Nor need we shrink from inviting this heavenly Guest to participation in our earthly joys. He who accepted the invitation to a wedding feast will,

if invited, be with us. And if we feel they are of such a nature that He cannot be invited, and be conspicuous in their midst, the disciple should not be there either. Of this we may be quite sure—the disciples would never have been there had Jesus not been invited. What a Divine and holy example is thus set before us to guide us in every step of life, in the very opening of this chapter! What a simple and conclusive test in the midst of doubt and perplexity! He who was our high and holy Exemplar would grace the marriage feast of a kinsman, but was never known to be present at a place of amusement merely. May we, as obedient children, set His blessed example before us as our guide through life!

It would seem that the marriage was one from the humbler ranks of life, otherwise the arrival of a few additional guests would have made no difference in the supply of wine, which was now lacking. It was this very *want*, caused by His own coming, which was the occasion for the manifestation of His glory. It is the emptiness and poverty of the creature coming into contact with the fulness and grace of the Saviour that is the occasion for reflecting His glory. But for that want, the Saviour would never have been brought before us in this scene as the all-sufficient One. But for our sin and misery, what marvellous exhibitions of grace and love would for ever have remained undisplayed

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in the mind of God! It was not our sin that created that grace; it only brought it to light; it only brought it before our eyes, that our hearts might be softened and won. "In this was *manifested* the love of God to us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him."

But not only the *want* at the feast was the Saviour's own creation; the *supply* also was His. The same Divine power produces both, whether at a marriage feast or in the soul of man. Not till He appears do they become conscious of that want. The wine of their own is sufficient, and they know nothing of a better, which He alone can give. The heart is satisfied with the world and its pleasures and joys, satisfied with itself and everything by which it is surrounded—till the Saviour enters. Then the scene changes. The insufficiency of all begins to be felt, and is the first evidence of His entrance. This the Spirit of God gradually deepens. Go where it will, into whatever scenes, the soul feels an aching void the world can never fill. The brightest and best it can offer seems to be but a mockery. There is desolation within, and its gilded attractions seem like the shadows of death falling on the heart. It longs for something to meet its restlessness and craving, but longs in vain. The chasm becomes deeper. Nothing can fill it up. Driven like a bird from branch to branch,

and from tree to tree, it finds no rest but in soaring heavenward. It turns to Jesus, and, fixing its eye on Him, finds what alone can meet it. There it finds a resting-place, and that resting-place a delight. Its language no longer is, "*Who* will show me any good?" but, "Lord, lift *Thou* up the light of Thy countenance upon me." Blessed change! The boundary-line between life and death is crossed. The soul has planted its feet on the first step of the ladder to glory.

And it is the presence of Jesus stamping insufficiency on everything, and deepening within us a want that none but He can fill, that the believer needs day by day. This will make us more separate from the world—more out of love with it. It will make the spirit yearn towards Him; it will make us live more in heaven; it will quicken our communion with God; it will make things within the veil more real and pleasant to our view; it will disperse the sentimental and shadowy from our spiritual life, and stamp it before men with the image of God. Oh, for more of this in our souls, more of the presence of Jesus, making us, like the guests at Cana's marriage feast, feel the insufficiency of our wine—of ourselves and everything down here—everything but Him! Dear Christian reader, do you not long for this? Is not indwelling sin a burden to you? Is not the earthly spirit a dead weight? Do you not feel what a wilderness this

world is? Is there anything half so precious as Jesus? Would not the whole world placed in the scale be lighter than the air in comparison? Such must He be to you if you know anything of Him. And as you have tasted of the Lord's preciousness, do you not long to have His presence more deeply realised by your soul, so that the evil heart may be kept down, the world eclipsed, and heaven brightened to your view? The more clearly the Spirit of God brings Him before your heart, the more deeply will you feel the insufficiency of all but Him. The want is so little felt, because He is not there in power. There is so little yearning after Him, after holiness, after heaven, because He is not continually before the soul. To many children of God the world has very little of the wilderness about it; it is more of a pleasant home: the evil heart, the worldly spirit, the earthly affections, are to many no pressure, no weight. The insufficiency of everything below Christ is not deeply realised—rather the world is found to be sufficient in so many ways, that they seem to be living in it and for it. Why is this? Because Jesus is not living in the soul—brought home to it in Divine power by the Holy Spirit. A veil is upon it. Its spiritual life is in a state of stagnation. The worldly life is far more a reality than the spiritual one. The Saviour stands, as in the Church of Laodicea, outside, knocking at the door, but seldom

admitted. They "sup not with Him, nor He with them." There is little or no communion with God. They are practically dead while they live. Christian reader, let your one desire, your constant prayer, ever be, "Lord, enter in, and make Thy presence felt. Draw me, I will run after Thee." With His presence more realised, every minor affection will be preserved and sanctified, every earthly desire will be purified, and everything of earth will receive the stamp of heaven. There will then be more life in the soul, more power over the flesh, more victory over the world, more devotedness to God, and more earnest living to the Lord. This is what the Church wants now; this is what the believer wants, too; this is what you and I want, reader, day by day.

But there is one class in the world who resemble some of these at the marriage feast. They have their type in the governor and his guests. The want is felt, and when the good wine is supplied they can appreciate its excellence. But there it ends. They feel the want, but they know nothing of Him who can meet it. They feel the insufficiency of everything of their own, but they know nothing of Him who is the all-sufficient One. They can appreciate and enjoy His temporal mercies and providential blessings, and yet remain ignorant of Him. How large a class is this in the world! They feel the insufficiency of the world to make

them happy; they feel, in the midst of all it supplies, a want that nothing seems to fill, yet they know not Jesus. Oh, it is not enough to feel the want of something better, unless we feel that better thing to be Jesus. It is not enough to realise the insufficiency of all earthly things, unless we feel the all-sufficiency of Christ. Yet how many are in this sad state! They are of all most to be pitied. There they are from year to year filling their souls with husks, and yet inwardly unhappy. There they are in the vestibule of heaven—at its very gate, and yet never entering into rest. One scene after another of the world's fascinations is plunged into, in the hope of cheating away the ever-fretting uneasiness within. One cup after another of the world's exciting pleasures greedily quaffed, leaving behind a deeper sting, a wider chasm, a more feverish thirst. No rest, no satisfaction, no joy lighting up the soul—none. All is desolation and misery—perhaps despair. Oh that the poor, restless world only knew Jesus! Oh that its thirsting, panting, feverish spirits knew the well of living waters where they might quench their thirst! Then would its desert blossom as the rose. Then would its wilderness and solitary place be glad and rejoice.

How different are some! There was one in that company who felt the want as well as the others. She turns and addresses herself to the Saviour as

the One who alone can meet it. She knew that want could be met there, and there she turns. May we know this too, know it deeply, and follow her blessed and holy example at all times !

But the manner in which Mary approaches the Saviour is instructive. She makes no specific request. She simply *makes known* the want, the special need. So should we at all times thus memorialise the Saviour. "In everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be *made known* unto God." He is pledged to supply every need of His beloved child, whatever that need may be. "My God *shall* supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Let us only trust Him. He who hears the ravens when they cry, and makes those ravens feed His children, will not forget you, child of God. But remember, it will not be, it must not be, in *your* time or way, but in His. The Saviour shows Mary this in His reply : "*Mine* hour is not yet come." Perhaps she, like many a child of God since, looked for the performance of a miracle, for the immediate satisfaction of the want, the immediate answer to her prayer. Perhaps she thought that, as His mother, she should have some authority in the matter. The Lord shows her, however, that in His mediatorial power she can have no interference, while at all other times He would be subject. He must say to the nearest and dearest—yet with every mark of respect—"Woman,

what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." Let us ever remember this in all our approaches to the throne of grace. Let us make known our wants there, but remember that *His* hour may not yet have come for the answer. God has tarrying love as well as hasting love. He *will* answer, but at the *best* time and in the *best* way. We know not what that best is. Too quickly given or too long delayed might spoil the answer—nay, might turn the blessing into a curse. If we are kept waiting, let us be sure it is in love. Love—*Jesus'* love—will not keep us waiting one moment longer than is necessary to make the answer a real blessing. Only wait. "Blessed are all they that wait for him." "They that wait on the Lord shall not want *any good thing.*"

So Mary retires, not knowing when or how or according to what measure He will meet the emergency. Yet she retires with full confidence in *Him*, that whatever He does will be well. But how does she retire? She adopts the *present* course open to her in the meantime—*obedience* to all His commands, whatever they may be: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." What a pattern for us! Whatever may be our emergency, let us go and do likewise. Let us take it to Jesus. Let us leave the how and the when to Him. Let us retire with full confidence that all will be well. Let no moping melancholy or rebellion be seen, no fretfulness or murmuring

at the Lord's dealings, no frittering away faith's precious time of trial in sentimental sorrow and sloth. No, but let us up and work for God. Let us walk in obedience to His commands. Obedience is ours, all the rest is His. Thus let it be, dear Christian reader, with each of us, and we too shall soon see what was seen at Cana's marriage feast, the glory of Jesus manifested on our behalf.

How strikingly the Lord seems to intimate, by His answer to Mary, that the want *should be* fully met: "Mine hour is not *yet* come." It should come, but *not yet*. This "*yet*" was the bow in the dark cloud. It was the silver lining to the darkness of an apparent refusal. It was the rock for faith to rest upon, bidding the soul hope and wait and watch. The Lord often deals thus with His people. He leaves us a "*yet*" in the midst of all that seems against us. There is some precious promise, some past mercy experienced, some present blessing enjoyed, something of mercy even in judgment, that gives the soul encouragement. It lays hold of this and hopes. It stays itself upon the Lord. "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me," says the Psalmist; but he adds, "*yet* the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time." "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" but he adds, "I shall *yet* praise Him, who is the health of

my countenance, and my God." These "yets" are most precious to the soul. They bid it hope when all is despair. They let in a ray of light when all is darkness. They are the rays of the glorious sun skirting the darkness of the thunder-cloud as it broods over our heads. They are faith's bright stars in the dark canopy of sorrow, trial, and suffering, telling us that all is well beyond, a sun ever shining, love unceasing blending its colours in rainbow hues with mercy, grace, and truth, the sure and certain pledge of every needful blessing, both temporal and spiritual.

"And there were set there six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece." These stone water-pots were the vessels which had probably been used in purifying the guests at the marriage feast. "Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it."

The Christian may see in these empty vessels a figure of himself. They contained the precious blessings, the water for cleansing, and the wine for strengthening and refreshing. This is exactly the figure under which St. Paul describes the people of God: "*vessels* of mercy." They are emptied by the Spirit of God of all that is in them—self-righteous-

ness, self-confidence, self-trust, self in every form, before the blessings from Christ can be put into them. Thus emptied, they are filled by Him. They "receive Christ Jesus the Lord," in all the riches of His grace. And what these emptied vessels have *received*, is to be the cleansing and refreshing and strengthening of the wedding guests. What the Christian receives from God, and only that, will cleanse or refresh or strengthen the souls of others. God empties His vessels, then fills them ; and only what they get from Him, will He use in blessing others. Oh, may we never forget this in all our works and labours of love for Him ! May the consciousness that we are empty vessels ever keep us humble ! May the knowledge that God will use nothing but what is from Himself ever keep us waiting at His feet to be filled !

And now mark the blessing of obedience. Jesus says, "Fill the water-pots with water." They filled them. Again he says, "Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it." They had received no promise. They saw no apparent reason for so doing. There was nothing to lean upon but His "yet." But they obeyed. Mary *waited* ; the servants *obeyed* ; and now the blessing came—at the right time, in the right way, of the right measure, and with the right result—the glory of Jesus and the happiness of the creature.

"When the ruler of the feast had tasted the

water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants which drew the water knew); the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now." Little did the ruler know of the Divine power that had been at work to produce this bountiful provision. He thought little of the Divine hand whence the gift proceeded, while he enjoyed the gift itself. He bestowed his praises on the bridegroom, not on Jesus—on the creature, not on God. Man is the same still. He enjoys God's gifts, and is content to remain ignorant of God, forgetting that but for redeeming mercy he would not have one, that but for Him who died to purchase them, not even creation itself could receive one of God's bounties. But for infinite love interposing the woman's seed between fallen man and a holy God, such is the nature of sin, that a curse, more awful than thought can conceive or words can describe, must have fallen upon our world and upon all Adam's posterity. Mercy stepped between and softened the judgment. It left man only the droppings of the thunder-cloud, while the explosion was reserved for the God-Man to bear. In all the sorrow, sin, and misery he has brought upon himself, even in its bitterest state, he is only tasting the cup which,

but for redeeming love, he must have drunk to the dregs. How little the men of the world are aware of this! How little they think that even in their unconverted state they are debtors to sovereign grace for every comfort of life! How little they think that but for the love of Jesus interposing itself between a holy God and a sin-laden world, even nature herself would be cursed with a curse inconceivable, stamping deformity and death where all is now life and beauty! "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain." True. "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." True. God's own people "groan within themselves, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." True. But what is it after all? Only the *shadow* compared with the *substance* of what it would have been but for that precious Saviour who endured the substance Himself, and whom they are daily despising and rejecting. O thoughtless world; O ungrateful rebellious man—the rejector of One to whom thou art hourly indebted for every blessing in nature and providence, and but for whose interposing mercy thine existence here would be intolerable!

We are told that though the ruler knew not whence the good wine was, the servants that drew the water knew. It is so to the present hour. They who obey the Lord, who serve Him, and wait for Him, as they did, shall know what is hidden

from the world. They know the Saviour, for they have had close dealings with Him. They trace every blessing up to Him. While they enjoy His gifts, they prize Him above all. They know whence the good wine is, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." They love, and serve, and wait, and therefore they know what the world cannot understand; for "if any man will *do* His will, he shall *know* of the doctrine whether it be of God." They follow in His footsteps, they cleave to His word, they delight in His service, they know His ways of grace and love and mercy. Why? Like these servants at the feast—they have been *behind the scene*.

Reader, are you behind the scene? Are you living in an atmosphere the world breathes not? While you are enjoying God's bounties in providence, like the ruler, are you, like the servants, behind the scene—on the other side of "things seen and temporal," living by faith on the Son of God? Do you know what it is to have constant dealings with Jesus, where the world sees not and knows not? Are you His servant, near to His side, listening to His voice, obeying His word, and following in His steps? Only thus will you know what is hidden from the world. Only thus will you know what "the secret of the Lord" is. Only thus will you truly *know* Jesus—what a precious Saviour He is—trace His love's continued stream

in every event of life, and be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Only thus will you be what you ought to be—a living testimony for God in the midst of a world lying in the wicked one. Reader, while others are content to see God in the guest-chamber, be it your high and holy aim to live *behind the scene*.

It was at this “beginning of miracles” the Saviour showed forth His glory in providing for the comfort of the wedding guests. We may see foreshadowed in it another bride and another bridegroom. Through this feast our thoughts are carried forward to the time when “the marriage of the Lamb is come, and when His wife hath made herself ready.” Perhaps our blessed Lord had reference to this in selecting a wedding feast as the first occasion of a miracle. Then shall the feast be honoured with Jesus as its bridegroom, and supplying to the guests gathered out of every kingdom and nation and tongue and kindred, everlasting abundance from His own infinite resources. He shall then satisfy every want, heal every sorrow, dry every tear, and the former things shall have passed away for ever. “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from

their eyes." Blessed anticipation! "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

One word in conclusion: What is the final ending of this feast? The guests disappear—the wine-vessels, the servants, the bridegroom, the ruler, and even His own blessed mother—all disappear from the scene but Jesus manifesting His glory and the disciples believing on Him. So should it ever be, whether at a marriage feast or in anything else. May everything disappear but Him, and we believing in Him—the nearest and dearest and best lost sight of in Him! May all things else sink into insignificance by His side—hidden in the clefts of the Rock of Ages! This is the great end for which we were redeemed, that we should show forth here and hereafter "the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light." No higher end is attained in heaven, for there Jesus is all, and we worshippers at His feet throughout eternity. And when we fulfil this great end on earth, our removal will be but one of transition from faith to sight. Blessed Saviour! manifest Thy glory in us and in all our ways, and let us ever remain believers and worshippers at Thy feet. May every reader of these pages be brought by Thy Spirit's teaching to the same holy conclusion of this Galilean wedding feast!

Jesus' "hour is not yet come,"
Let this word thine answer be ;
Pilgrim asking for thy home,
Longing to be blest and free,
Yet a season tarry on—
Nobly borne is nobly done.

While oppressing cares and fears
Night and day no respite leave,
Still prolonged through many years,
None to help thee or relieve :
Hold the word of promise fast,
Till deliverance comes at last.

Every creature, hope, and trust,
Every earthly prop or stay,
May be prostrate in the dust—
May have failed or passed away :
Then when darkest falls the night,
Jesus comes, and all is light.

Yea, the Comforter draws nigh
To the breaking, bursting heart ;
For with tender sympathy
He has seen and felt its smart :
Through its darkest hours of ill
He is waiting, watching still.

Dost thou ask, *When* comes His hour ?
Then, when it shall aid thee best ;
Trust His faithfulness and power,—
Trust in Him, and quiet rest :
Suffer on, and hope and wait,
Jesus never comes too late.

20 *JESUS AT THE MARRIAGE FEAST.*

Blessed day ! which hastens fast—
End of conflict and of sin ;
Death itself shall die at last—
Heaven's eternal joys begin !
Then eternity shall prove
God is light and God is love !

SPITTA.

II.

*JESUS AND THE WOMAN WHO TOUCHED
HIM.*

MARK v. 24-34.

OUR blessed Lord was truly called the Light of the world. It is the property of light *to make manifest*; and this was emphatically the case with Him, for wherever He journeyed He brought to light what would otherwise have been hidden. The hidden desires, wants, diseases, the hidden unbelief and enmity of the heart—all seemed to be drawn out by the very presence of the Saviour. His walks in and out among the sons and daughters of sin and sorrow, ignorance and woe, seemed to draw to the surface all that had lain concealed. His presence did not create them, but it brought them to light. Sin and misery, want and woe, hatred and fear, disease and death, all came forth from their secret hiding-places under the influence of this Light of heaven, and either revived beneath His healing rays, or withered under His holy in-

fluence. Mercy distilled from His lips like the dews of heaven, refreshing and healing the needy and desolate ones that thronged His path and that clung to the life-giving words that fell from His lips with the mellowed softness of heaven's own music; while the hidden enmity of the heart leaping forth with unrestrained violence heard in them its death-knell, and shrank back, appalled by the holy brightness of the Son of God, to its envenomed prison-house.

And as it is by contrast that everything is seen in its truest colours, so it is, when these are brought into association with the Lord of glory, that the pictures of grace from the sacred gallery of Gospel portraiture shine with effulgent rays, and charm our hearts with their heavenly beauty. They meet *our* needs. They restore *our* spirits. They increase *our* faith. They seem as if they had been drawn purposely for us, and as if the inspired pencil that delineated them had none other than ourselves in view. We fix them in the secret chambers of our souls, and feel we have the costliest treasure in heaven or earth. We feel we can only yield them at one price—the price of the soul itself. They are linked together, and linked by God Himself; and what “God hath joined together let no man put asunder.”

We stand before one of these portraitures of grace suspended from the walls of the Gospel gal-

lery. It is one with a dark background of misery and disease, throwing out in bold relief the Divine pencillings of mercy, grace, and love. The Saviour was journeying at the summons of mercy. A needy, helpless creature lay at the point of death. The bleeding heart of the father interceded for his loved one, and the Saviour bent His steps towards the sorrow-stricken home. Multitudes thronged His path and pressed upon Him. Suddenly His steps were arrested by a poor, wasted, bowed-down wreck of humanity. She had borne the burden of suffering and disease for twelve years, and groaned beneath its weight. She had tried every resource within her reach, and tried in vain. She had spent her all on the world's physicians, and they had left her worse than they found her. There she lay in the Saviour's path, a poor shattered wreck of humanity, with the life-blood flowing from her body, and with no hand to staunch the wound—a standing testimony to this hour of the impotence of the world to meet man's deepest needs.

From the crowd of curious or thoughtless beings that throng the Saviour's path, the Holy Spirit selects this one, and brings her conspicuously before our view. What a picture does the scene, on its very first appearance, present to our notice! How true, to this very hour, its lessons! Crowds throng and press the Saviour in various ways, but one here and there among the throng—helpless and

needy—in whose inward hearts the name of Jesus has sounded like music, touch Him, because they feel there is in Him the only balm that can heal the spiritual diseases of their souls. They feel their inward disease. They feel that He alone can heal them, and they cast themselves at His feet. Content they would be, like this helpless woman, to be hidden, if only they might touch the Saviour's hem. While others throng the Saviour in churches and chapels, in ordinances and ceremonies, in rites and rituals, in prayers and fastings, they feel that these pressings on Him are not in themselves sufficient. They have no virtue in them for their deadly diseases. While they go with the throng, they feel they need something of which these are all but the outward shadows—the channels, it may be, but not the living stream. They feel that the holiest and the best alone are poverty itself. It is Jesus they want. Jesus Himself—Jesus only. And if they touch not Him, they turn away, like Mary from the sepulchre, with a bleeding heart and a tearful eye, and find no resting-place till Jesus reveals Himself to their souls. These earthly channels are all dry without Him, and that which conveys Him *in the most direct manner* to the soul is the most Divine and most worthy of preference. The instrument derives from Him its sole value. At best it is but an earthen vessel, even though it is stamped with heaven's own beauty. When Jesus

fills it, then is the vessel glorious. When anything else is there, either wholly or in part, the vessel has only one merit—that of being broken to pieces. The silver has become dross; the fine gold has become dim.

And oh, how different a thing it is to press and throng the Saviour with the crowd, and to touch Him! There is just all the difference there—the difference between life and death, between an heir of glory and one hopelessly lost. They feel no spiritual disease. They bow down under the weight of no spiritual malady. They feel no heart-need of Jesus. They know experimentally of no hidden virtue in His dear name. It awakens no chord in their hearts. To all this they are strangers. True, their religion may teach it; their minister may preach it; their creeds may profess it; their lips may acknowledge it; the bowed head may reverence it; the freedom from open glaring sin may yield some conformity to its demands. Ah! this is only thronging and pressing the Saviour. In all this *He* remains untouched. There is no deep need in the heart. There is no virtue communicated from Him. They know not Jesus, with all their outward conformity; for He is known only by the needy soul. The soul's deep poverty touches the deep springs of His heart, and draws forth the healing virtue from within.

Well; she had an incurable disease—true type of sin—and she *felt* it. So far, all was right. To

feel that we are diseased is the first step towards the Divine remedy. There can be no remedy without it. But how many feel their sinful state who have not found the remedy, nor sought it! Conscience may make a man feel that he is a sinner; but the Holy Spirit can alone reveal the remedy and lead the soul to obtain it. This throws no shade over the blessed truth that the Holy Spirit is the convincer of sin, for when *He* convinces, *He* reveals the remedy and leads the soul to it. The light of natural conscience, even in its darkest state, makes all men feel they are sinners. Let us not suppose for a moment that this is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Divine mark which distinguishes the work of the natural conscience from that of the Holy Spirit is that *He* leads the soul *He* convinces to Jesus. Some there are who tell us that this work of the natural conscience is, in all cases, the work of God's Holy Spirit! So that the poor cannibal, who devours his fellow-man, and offers another to appease the wrath of an imaginary deity, is under the influence of the Holy Spirit, though he may never have heard of Christ or His Gospel! Alas for such teachers! How comes it that *He* does one part of His work, and leaves the other undone? If the conviction of sin in the breast of the poor savage be the work of the Holy Spirit, how is it that *He* begins His work and leaves it unfinished—leaving the poor soul to die

in its sin? How is it that He convinces of sin, and yet, having so convinced it, mocks it by revealing no remedy? Is not such a view most dishonouring to Him? Is it not blasphemous? Does it not place Him before us in a repulsive light? Far be it from me to say that such a light in the case I have alluded to is *nothing*. It is a *natural* light, and by it, where the Gospel has never been heard, the soul will probably be judged. But it is not the work of the Holy Ghost. He operates through the medium of the *written word*. Does He convince? It is through some stray beam of light that has found its way from that word to the soul, like the trickling rivulet among the distant hills from the river or the ocean. Does He rebuke? It is by some truth from its treasury taking hold of the conscience. Does He comfort? It is by some promise from its storehouse. Does He quicken? It is by some precept or warning from its manifold and inexhaustible resources. The Spirit speaks and operates through the word. God has His witness in the breast of every man living, leaving him without excuse (Rom. i.) Let us not confound it, however, with the work of the Holy Spirit, whose distinctive operation is through the word of God. This is the only check we have against error. Were it not for this, there would be nothing to distinguish the wildest excesses of the brain from the genuine work of God. He

convinces the soul of sin by bringing it under the light of the holy law of God. He makes sin to be exceeding sinful. He enlightens the understanding. He corrects the judgment. He instructs the mind. He educates the heart. The word is the medium; and where He begins His work, He never leaves it till it is finished, and the believer is presented faultless before the throne.

For many a long year the burden had pressed upon this woman. She had sought long and earnestly for some skilful hand to heal the wound. She had consulted the world's physicians on every side, but in vain. Her burden only increased. Her disease spread. Poverty stared her in the face. They had taken from her all she possessed, and what had they done for her? Only increased her suffering. Poor world! thou hast no remedy for the diseases of the soul. Thou hast no medicine for a bleeding heart. He who repairs to thee in his hour of need finds a broken cistern. Thou canst empty, but never fill. Thou canst promise, but never perform. Thou canst bruise, but never heal. Thou canst take away all the poor soul has, but leave it worse and not better. The flower may be plucked by thy ruthless hand, but the stalk be left to wither on the ground. So she found it, and so have all who have sought it as she did.

Ah, how much we learn from this case, of our utter inability to find the Divine remedy, even

when brought to a knowledge of our true state before God. Like her, the soul convinced of sin, if left to itself, will repair to the world's physicians instead of Jesus. It is like a little child, and needs to be led every step of the way. There is within it a tendency to diverge, of which it cannot divest itself. Like the child, it will leave the path and turn aside to pluck the flowers, however poisonous they may be. Strange that it should at every step seek what must be its ruin! But it does. It is its nature. And if God the Spirit carry not on the work He has begun, if He lead not the poor foolish child *every* step of the way,—not one would be found before the throne to praise the Lord for the riches of His grace. Heaven would be a desert but for sovereign grace. Heaven would be untenanted by a single redeemed one, but for the continued leading, restoring, and upholding of God's Holy Spirit. O believer, do *you* not feel it so? Is this the doctrine merely of a certain class? Is it not rather a truth deeply endorsed by your own daily, hourly experience? Surely the answer to every cavil lies in your own individual history. Could you trust yourself for the next hour without Him? Let reason and argument aim their polished shafts at this glorious doctrine, yet there is a testimony to its truth which nothing can gainsay—your own individual experience.

And mark who it was that had not only taken

her all, but left her worse. It was the world's *physicians*—the world's professed healers. So is it to the present hour. Does the soul feel its diseases? What have the world's physicians to offer? Its religion—its penances and prayers—its fastings and ceremonies—its toils and labours—its miserable “hope” after death. Oh, how these things rob the soul, leaving it in deeper wretchedness than before! Thus it labours and toils—not twelve years, but a whole lifetime, with a disease ever deepening. No light of truth shines within, telling of sin put away, and peace through the blood of Jesus. No present salvation, lighting up the soul with joy, quickening its steps in devotedness to the Lord, and making that service a delight instead of a task. All is wretchedness within, darkness and uncertainty, fear and dread, bondage and restraint, dreariness and death. Oh, miserable physicians for the soul! Yet such are the best. Such are all the world has, or ever had, till we go to Jesus and listen to the sweet sounds of redeeming love from His lips. The undying memorial found scratched by his own hand over the skeleton remains of a bishop in the dungeons of Naples, is the only true superscription over the brightest and best the world can hold out—“No rest here but in Christ.” No rest but in Christ; and he who would repair elsewhere may behold in this shattered wreck of humanity his own certain history to the end.

But mark how the soul clings to anything in itself. So long as she had *means* to pay these physicians, so long would she continue to try them, and so long would God let her go on. So long as the sinner is conscious he has within himself anything to merit salvation, so long will he trade upon that, and so long will God let him go on. No salvation but by grace. Nothing in the sinner to earn it, nothing from which he can lay claim to it. All this must go. He must become a bankrupt—with nothing in the purse. Diseased and helpless, ruined and undone—such are they whom Jesus came to seek and save. When the sinner is brought to this, as she was—with no purse to fly to, no help at hand—then does the Spirit reveal Jesus to the soul. Oh, how precious then is His dear name! How sweet the notes of mercy! How Divine the blood that heals the soul! How valuable the word of truth! What a reality in all, and how suited to our case!

Reader, have *you* been brought to this? Have you been brought, poor and wretched, helpless and undone, to the feet of Jesus? If you are ever to be saved, you *must* come to this. Be not deceived: all religion without this is counterfeit. It may have upon it the very stamp of heaven itself; without this it is a mockery. It is blinding your eyes, while it is leading you onward to certain destruction. Again I say, be not deceived. Without this, not a

glimmer of Divine life has ever yet dawned on your soul. You are dead while you live.

Christian reader, have you been brought to this? Yes, you have if you are a Christian. Then *keep* in this place. Ah, it is often much easier for the Spirit to *bring* us there than to *keep* us there. The heart is so deceitful. As a *doctrine*, how we prize this! We feel that in the matter of salvation, this must ever be our place. But to keep here; to be at all times self-emptied; to carry it with us into all our ways—how rare, how difficult! How often *complacency* steals into the heart under the conscious possession of spiritual mercies or spiritual gifts! How often the Spirit's work within us is tarnished by conscious spiritual superiority, painfully visible perhaps to all but ourselves! Oh, how self-complacency, conscious superiority, a lofty air or elevated bearing in spiritual things, betrays the soul's leanness, its *practical* alienation from God, its evidence of low communion, and that a process of declension is going on within! Oh, the deceitfulness of the heart! The Christian's danger is not so much in not acknowledging that he is helpless and ruined in the matter of his soul's salvation, but in feeling this continually, and in all things. He needs to have the prayer daily on his lips, "Lord, keep me from my own evil heart. Keep me lest I, not thou, be all. Keep me, lest in my services for thee, self may poison everything." Self *will* be

uppermost. It is its *nature*; and most when engaged in the things of God. Then the holy garment blinds us to a sense of the deadly gangrene within. We suspect it least where we should suspect it most. Thus it is fostered, and God is not glorified.

When she "had spent all that she had," she heard of Jesus. The creature must be brought to the end of everything, ere the Holy Spirit can make known Christ. Jesus must be a full Saviour, an exclusive Saviour, or none at all. So long as there is any resource to which it can look for the healing of its diseases—no matter what it may be—Christ cannot meet it in the fulness of the riches of His grace. This is a hard lesson: it is the last the flesh will learn. And yet it *must* be learnt, ere God can act, or redeeming mercy be experienced and prized. God will not yield in His requirements. This is absolutely indispensable. Till you have "spent all that you have," till you have been brought to the end of everything, to the end of all hope of anything in yourself, or in the world for which you are living, or in your outward religion, your lifeless creed, your formal profession,—till you have been brought, reader, to the end of everything—poor, helpless, undone, with every prop removed,—you will never hear the voice of the Spirit making known Jesus to you. You will never know the sweetness of His name, the healing virtue of His precious blood. This is the only state in which He can be prized—

the only state in which He can be experienced as the Saviour of sinners, and He will never enter the heart on any other terms. He will not enter as a half-Saviour, or to be esteemed, venerated, respected. No; He came into the world for no such purpose. Shame on such dishonour to His blessed mission! He came to die "for the *ungodly*," "to seek and to save the *lost*;" and wherever He meets a heart that has not been brought to know that *it* is such—to cover itself with dust and ashes, under a sense of this—He passes it by.

Reader, you are just fit for the Saviour if you have been brought to this. Do I hear you saying, "I feel I am a sinner. I see so many inconsistencies in my life that I am ashamed of myself. Though I know I ought to be what God says, yet I find I cannot; my sins get the better of me. My conscience is troubled. I know I shall have to meet God, and yet the thought is dreadful. I am wretched." This is the Spirit of God bringing you to feel that you are ungodly. He is making your conscience feel it. Then it is, when you are brought to this, the voice of the Lord speaks, and says, "*You are ungodly*, but in due time Christ died for the *ungodly*." How "in due time?" Just in due time for us, when we had lost, ruined, sinned away our blessings. When you, reader, are brought to the sense of this, then is your "due time." Then does the Spirit make known that you, ungodly as

you *feel* yourself to be, are the one Christ shed His blood for. He bore the curse of your ungodliness. He took all your sins on Himself—bore them away—left none for God to look upon—not one. They are all gone for ever from His view. “The wages of sin—of *your* sin—is eternal death; and these wages you must have paid, had Jesus not paid them for you. But He has. The debt of *death* on account of your sins has been paid by Him. He died, “the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.” The debt has been fully paid, and now you are the Lord’s freeman. Oh, what joy, what comfort to the conscience bowed down under a sense of its ungodliness! Reader, believe this precious truth, and let the song of praise burst forth from your lips—“There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” Let conscience condemn, let Satan accuse, let the law thunder. Be it so. Another has answered all their claims—every one. Look at Jesus. He is your substitute. He has finished the work. God sees you now in Jesus, and is well pleased with you for His sake. Poor, bankrupt sinner, that hast spent all that thou hast—that hast toiled and laboured and struggled, and art nothing better, but worse,—listen to the Spirit of God pointing thee to Jesus: “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.” “He was bruised for our iniquities, He was wounded for our transgressions, and by His

stripes we are healed." "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all"—of *thee*, sinner. It was *all* laid on Jesus. By His stripes *thou* art healed. Oh! believe and be happy: believe and rejoice; believe and let songs of praises be on thy lips; believe, and—

" . . . Tell to sinners all around,
What a dear Saviour *thou* hast found."

But there is a lesson here for the Christian too—a needed one. When she "had spent all she had," she heard of Jesus. Christian, God must bring you to this all through your history. What are you looking to for help in your trials, for sympathy in your distresses, for healing in your sorrows? To the world? To Christian friends? To some resources of your own? Oh vain—vain every one. They are all the world's physicians at best. God must bring you to "spend all that you have." He must, He will, be all. When you have tried everything, and every one, and are brought to the end of the creature in every form, nothing better, but worse; when you have been brought to lie helpless at the feet of Jesus, then will you have spent all that you had. Then will you see "the Lord's hand that *it* is not shortened." Then will the voice of Jesus be heard. In His time, and in His way, will come the healing touch that shall be more to you than the world, or friends, or anything.

You ought to have trusted in none of these at first; you ought to have gone straight to Jesus at once, and closed your eyes to all else. But you did not. You had friends, you had means, you had resources, and you went to them. So the Lord allowed you to go on till you "spent all you had;" and then, when you had come to the end of everything, He had mercy on you. Yes, dear Christian reader, remember this lesson. Bear it in mind all through your history. You must come to the end of everything here but Jesus. Only then will you know what a Saviour He is. Only then will you know His unutterable preciousness. Only then you will know what thought cannot conceive nor tongue express. We must be shut up alone with Jesus, to know all that is in Him. We never half know Him till then. When the landscape is clouded, when the sky is dark, when the stream is dry, when the pitcher is broken, and when every bud and blossom and flower and leaf are seared and frost-bitten, then is Christ precious! We have come to the end of the creature, and the Spirit presses Jesus upon us. We feel our need. We lie at His feet. We are the poor bankrupts; He the God of all grace. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them." Then we know Jesus as He seeks to be known, supplying the greatest wants,

meeting the worst cases, filling the emptiest souls. Then He is indeed a *Saviour*, not in name, but in power. We *taste* and see that the Lord is gracious.

And mark how God deals with His people. He often lets things go to the worst with them before He steps in. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. He lets us come to the end of everything. Flesh and blood shrink, and we feel that none but He can help us. We are brought to this often, and when brought to it we are often kept in it, waiting on the Lord. Such seasons are trying, but they are the discipline of His hand, to wean us from everything here but Himself. He said to the disciples of old, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace." What things had He spoken? Things of sorrow, things of sadness, things to make the flesh creep, along with things cheering and delightful,—a *mingled* cup, "judgment and mercy." Such is the cup the Lord always presents to His people here. And why? The reason is always the same, "That in me ye might have peace." Mark it well, reader, "That in *me* ye might have peace." This mingled cup is given to wean us from everything to Him. And it is well it is a *mixed* cup, for no other would ever wean us. Idolatry is so rooted in our nature, that the *mixed* cup, seen rightly, is unmingled love

and mercy. Without it we should soon, like Israel of old, be full, and forget God.

This was the way God dealt with this woman. She was allowed to go on. Things got worse and worse. She knew it not, but love was only emptying the vessel by this painful process to fill it with heavenly virtue. I daresay she often counted her money, and watched with tearful eye and trembling heart the purse gradually diminishing. When the last penny was gone, she perhaps thought all was over. And where were her physicians? All had gone. And there she was, weaker than ever. Her malady had increased, and they had been the means of it. Ah! the world can do no more. It may increase the malady, but it can never heal it; and those who seek *its* healing powers return with a bleeding and desolate heart. We can fancy this woman's inward agony: "What shall I do? I shall never have this terrible disease healed. The grave is before me. There is no hope." How many a poor and needy one has felt the same—the tongue failing for thirst, and not a drop of water near to quench it! "Oh," says one, "I shall never have this load of sin removed! It is a burden too heavy to bear." "I shall never bear this crushing sorrow," is the language of another. "My heart is overwhelmed within me. I am poured out like water. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Ah! "judge not the Lord by feeble sense,

but trust Him for His grace." "His way is in the sea, and His path in the mighty waters." "The Lord sitteth upon the waterflood; the Lord remaineth King for ever." He is only preparing you for the revelation of Himself. He is emptying the vessel that He may fill it. Every hair of your head is numbered. Every turn and bend in your chequered history is in His hand and on His heart. Not one unneeded sorrow will He send. Not one rough wave shall break over the frail vessel without His will. The Pilot is at the helm. The mariner may be at his wits' end, but the tempest-tossed vessel shall outride the storm, and reach the haven where He would have it. Be still, and know that He is God. Look not, like Peter, at the boiling flood at your feet, or the blackness of darkness overhead. Look at Jesus, and all will be well. You shall tread the waves in safety, and rejoice.

Brought to the end of the creature, bowed down under a load of disease, with an empty purse, and nothing to look to—at such a juncture, this woman heard of Jesus. Oh, how sweet is the sound of His dear name to such! "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!" In such a state we are prepared to receive the Saviour as He seeks to be received. In such a state, but in no other, are the sinner and the Saviour fitted for each other.

The silences of God's word on certain subjects are very striking, and as important to us as those that are revealed. One of these most expressive silences forms an important feature in the history of this woman. She had learned much about Jesus. She possessed faith of no common order. The very sound of His name drew her to His feet. The very "touch," and that of His "clothes," she felt assured, would be sufficient. She knew there was virtue in Him. She knew that it would do for her what all her physicians had failed to accomplish—make her whole. Where did she learn all this? We are not told. There is a veil over it all. Let not some one say, "Oh, she was told it." Her language and conduct are not those resulting from a report. They are the exponents of a deep conviction, which no report could have produced. Repeated disappointments, such as she had met with, would have cast suspicion on any mere report. The confidence and faith implied in them lead us to seek their explanation in a far different origin. A power had evidently been at work in her heart, of which she in all probability was unconscious, and of which she could offer no explanation. The Spirit of God had been preparing the vessel for the virtue that was to be poured into it. He opened her ear to the sound of the name of Jesus. There was something in it which she felt met her case. There was something in it which led her to His feet. The same blessed

Spirit revealed to her the "virtue" in Him. He revealed to her the truth that the "touch" of trembling faith was enough to draw that virtue from Him. He revealed to her that her need would meet its fulness in Him. The Spirit taught her—the Spirit led her to His feet. No other explanation can be given of her confidence and assurance, her knowledge and faith, in the face of the many disappointments she had met with. No mere report could have produced them. Impossible. Now we see the reason for the veil over this part of her history. The Spirit's leadings are the same in every case. The first report, the secret conviction, the thought darting through the mind like a flash of lightning, the uplifted eye, the falling tear,—all that secret and often long process, involving, perhaps, the history of years of providential dealings, by which the soul emerges from darkness to light, under the gentle, unperceived leadings of the Spirit of God. Who knows it? Where is its record? Only on high. There is a veil over it all here. None sees it. Like the volcanic eruption that, unseen to mortal eye, has little by little been gathering its elements for one grand explosion, until it makes itself heard and felt, so with the history of conversion to God. What are called sudden conversions are, most of them, only sudden in the same sense as that eruption. The work had been going on before in secret, under the eye

and hand of God. The Spirit of God had been doing His work, and if we had been behind the scene, we might have seen it years ago. But we are not behind the curtain. It is well that we are not. It is all His work, and too secret for mortal eye. There is a veil over the Spirit's dealings,—as with her, so with all God's people. We see the *effects*—the touch, the cure, the blessing. We see one who had been dead in sins, now alive unto God, loving Him, serving Him, rejoicing in Him, and we wonder. The *process* of that change we saw not. Its record is on high. One thing, however, we see, which is important to observe. However varied may be the *process* by which He leads each, however long or short, He leads every one to Jesus. It was to Jesus He led her, to Jesus only. For Him He had been training her in secret, for Him only. So is it to the present hour. The Spirit ever leads to Jesus, to Jesus only. This is the genuine mark on His work. "He shall glorify me." Wherever the soul is not led, as this woman was, to the feet of Jesus, there we may be sure it is not the Spirit's work. Not only so, but the effects of His work are the same in every case as in hers—the conscious disease, the conscious poverty, the entire emptying of self, the falling at the feet of Jesus, and an inward experience of His healing virtue.

Reader, has this been the history of *your* conversion to God? If not, it is not genuine. These are

the footprints of the Spirit of God in *every* case of real conversion ; and if they are not seen in your history, it is because you are yet unconverted.

Well, she came to Jesus. There was much in her thoughts about Him that was wrong and dishonouring. She did not know Him fully, but the Spirit of God was leading her step by step. She felt her disease, she felt her need, she was poor and helpless, and in this state she came. Grace meets us not according to our correct views, or right thoughts of God, but according to our need. Alas ! if it demanded right thoughts and correct views of His character, where should we be—where would this woman have been ? If dishonouring thoughts of His love, ignorance of His character, blindness in seeing what He requires, were hindrances to His grace, she must have gone back to her home again, and remained a cripple for life. But, blessed be His holy name, it is not so. Grace is measured by no standard but the poverty and need of the sinner. Ignorance, blindness, and sin are no barriers to His grace. Nay, these are the things that call it forth. It is because we are such that grace meets us, welcomes us, saves us. The enlightening of the understanding as to the Saviour's true character comes afterwards. We come as beggars to the gate of heaven, as prodigals from the far country, and are embraced, clothed, and fed. So she came. She touched the Saviour's hem, and "immediately the

fountain of her blood was dried up." What she had sought for twelve long years from the world's physicians, and sought in vain, she got by a single touch of Jesus. How quickly He can heal the soul! We go to Him in our poverty and sin, in our sorrow and trial, and oh, what a Saviour we find Him! We get by a single touch of Him what the world could never give. How hollow are all the world's physicians when viewed in His light. How fully every want of the soul is met. What a mighty power there is in a touch, a word, a look from Him! One *look* brought a backsliding Apostle home to the fold. One *word* dried the tears of a weeping Magdalene, and filled her desolate heart with deep songs of joy. One *touch* of His clothes dried up the fountain of disease in this helpless cripple, and sent her to her home rejoicing. Precious Jesus! Who is like unto Thee? The poor, the penniless, the outcast, the diseased, the needy and helpless sons and daughters of sorrow and woe, ever repaired to Thy outstretched arms for mercy, and found it. Under Thy sheltering wings they reposed in safety, driven by the blasts and tempests of a heaving world. Thou hast been "the hiding-place from the wind, the covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Blessed Jesus! who is like unto Thee?

But now that grace has met her, and irrespective of her wrong thoughts, has healed her disease, the

Lord proceeds to correct her—to enlighten her as to His true character. “She came behind in the press.” “She fell down before Him fearing and trembling.” Why was all this? She thought He was about to condemn her. What dishonour to His love! What sad thoughts she had of Him! Her mind was still dark as to His true character. Her heart was not made perfect in the knowledge of His love. “Perfect love casteth out fear.” That love she deeply wronged. And is not this the twilight state of many a soul that has been led like her to the Saviour? They see the aspect of terror round His blessed brow. They look on the Lord’s trying dealings with them as judgments for their sin. They hesitate and tremble as to their individual safety in the finished work of Jesus—as if its application to themselves depended upon their uprightness of conduct, their frames and feelings and prayers. What dishonour to Him—to His finished work and gracious dealings!

Besides dishonour done to His love and grace, there was another error in her mind. If she were to receive the virtue from Jesus, it must not be hidden. The light was not to be put under a bushel. The world must see it, in order that Jesus may be glorified. This is the reason we receive grace, that we may let it shine before the world. We have been redeemed “that we should show forth the praises of Him who hath called us

out of darkness into His marvellous light." It might be all well enough for her to desire to be healed, and go to her home again with thankfulness for the mercy. But there was a touch of selfishness in it. What an opportunity was here for testimony to the grace and virtue in Jesus! A poor diseased woman, who for twelve long years had sought healing from the sources of the world, healed in an instant by a touch of the Saviour's clothes! Should this be hidden? No: God *will* be glorified in us. The glory of Jesus shone through this diseased cripple on to the throng. This is the way God is honoured. The world is to see the character of Jesus in His members, whose sin-diseased souls He has healed. The treasure is to shine through the earthen vessel, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

Nor this only. There was another lesson she had to learn. We cannot touch the Saviour and He not know it. She very likely thought she could. But no. The touch of trembling faith, the uplifted eye, the falling tear, the unexpressed desire,—all are known to Him. His eye is upon each. His heart open to each. In all our afflictions He is afflicted. Precious truth! "We have not an high-priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." These three truths then she did not seem to understand—

the love of Jesus, testimony to His grace, and His knowledge and sympathy. To hold the grace of God in ignorance of these truths should not be the desire of any disciple of Christ, nor will the Lord have it so. She is now to be taught them, and by the Lord Himself.

“And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched me?” It is important to notice the manner in which the Lord would teach this woman. He says, “Who touched me?” He knew who it was, for He knew all things. His question, however, was designed for the conscience, and for the conscience of the one who had been made partaker of His grace. It went to the conscience of the woman. Not one in the throng knew its meaning, nor the deep transaction that had been passing between God and her soul. We learn from this how God teaches His lessons. It is through the medium of conscience. The truth as it is in Jesus is not for the intellect, not for the understanding, but for the conscience. He spoke to her conscience *first*, and through it brought home the truths she should have known. Those who have been made partakers of His grace, must be exercised in conscience. It is thus all truth should come to us. When the Spirit of God teaches us, it is there He applies it first. Oh, how much religious knowledge there is in the world!

How much of the truths of God's word rest on the surface of man's being! How little comes home to the conscience! It is this familiarity with truth that is so dangerous and so prevalent. It is one of the Christian's greatest snares. From this comes that barren familiarity with the things of God that is so deadening to the soul. The heart is a busy mocker of the understanding. It cheats it into the belief that the truths in the understanding are the expression of its own character. It believes itself to be what it knows it ought to be. It is thus we invest ourselves with a fictitious character. There is the ready acquiescence in the truths of the Gospel and all its solemn requirements, and facility of speech in speaking of them, while the conscience is unstirred, and there is no truth brought home with power to the soul. Oh, how much need we have to be on our guard against truth not received through the conscience! How much need to pray that God would make all truth come home there, lest we become like those who have a name to live while they are dead. The deepest snares are those which lie alongside of truth. It is there they are least perceived and least suspected; and it is there the child of God has most occasion to watch and pray lest he enter into temptation. Reader, beware of truth resting in the intellect. Beware of truth that has not its root in the conscience, and its fruit in the daily life. Better never to have known the

truth, than to hold it in unrighteousness. Better to have been in ignorance of it, than that it should be inoperative in the soul, encrust the conscience, and deceive us with the notion that because we know it, it is the expression of our own hearts. There is an intellectual manner of acquiring truth, even in the Christian, which is very dangerous. The deep things of God coming from the lips of one who has been thus taught, is like the reflection of the glorious sun from the polished marble. It shines all the brighter often from its inability to penetrate. All is uninfluenced internally. Not a ray is absorbed. Alas! even the deep things of God are reflected from some hearts in a similar manner. Oh for a conscience ever touched with the Divine power of the truth! Lord, give writer and reader this! Lord of light and love and mercy, preserve each one from the hardening influence of the other!

It is through the conscience, then, that God would have us learn anything about *Him*. This is what is taught in this narrative. But we learn more than this. We are manifestly taught that we can only be instructed about Him by being brought into close personal dealing with Him—by His fullness meeting our deep needs. It was when she had come into His presence, and had for herself experienced His virtue, that the Saviour proceeded to enlighten her as to His true character. Thus is

it God ever teaches. When we have come as needy ones to His presence, and have felt His fullness meeting our emptiness, His truth comes home to us with Divine power: *thus* would He instruct us. Only then will the truth touch the conscience. It is because we do not learn in this way that conscience remains unexercised. We have not met Jesus, and in His own presence proved His preciousness, and so the truth we have learned is inoperative. Her conscience was exercised in *God's presence*. If we learn truth anywhere else, conscience will be the worse for it.

And how entirely the world is ignorant of what passes between the soul and God. The crowd knew nothing of what had been passing between this woman and Christ. Not even the disciples knew of it—so secret, so solemn, so individual a matter was it. “And His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched me?” Only the heart of the one He had made partaker of His grace could understand His words. So is it ever. Into the dealings between the soul and God none can enter. How deep, how sacred, how personal, how shut out from the eyes of all, are these blessed transactions! “The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy.” Yet all are open to Him. He knows exactly where the soul's *deepest* need is, and it is *at*

this point the Saviour is touched. "Who touched my *clothes*?" The medium is immaterial, if *He* is touched. It may be through the clothes, through the mercy-seat, through the word, through the ordinances of His house, on a sick-bed, in the solitude, or in the throng. What matter where or how, so that we touch *Him*? Let our daily emptiness, our hourly want, our pressing sorrow, our unsympathised trial, our unshared burden, only cast itself on the Lord's fulness, and we too, like her, shall experience that virtue to meet it which He only can give, and which the world can never take away.

"But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. And He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague." What had she got from Jesus? Just as much as she needed. No more. For this cause He came into our world—to meet man's *need*. He is the same to this hour. Christian, what do you get from the Saviour now? Just what you *need*. There are no dealings now between the Saviour and His people beyond this. Every approach to Him is founded on this. Every answer to prayer is according to this measure. Every blessing we receive corresponds with the need that it meets. Alas, then, for the soul that has never felt its

need of Him! It can receive nothing. There is no point of contact between that soul and Christ. There is no link uniting it to heaven. It is an alien, an outcast, a wandering star, "having no hope, and without God in the world." Reader, are *you* such a one? If you have never yet felt in your heart the need of Jesus, you can never receive His virtue to heal your sin-diseased soul. You will go on like this woman, not to better but worse, till body and soul sink beneath your deadly disease, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Remember, reader, I beseech you, this solemn truth—if there be in your heart no *felt* need of Jesus, there is no point of contact whatever between your soul and God; you are a *lost* soul.

Christian, seek to feel more deeply your need of that precious Saviour. Let your prayer ever be, "Lord, deepen the vessel, that it may receive more of Thy fulness." Nothing brings you so close to Him as these hidden needs. These are the most precious points of contact in your earthly history. These make the Saviour precious. These tell us something of *what* a Saviour He is. These are the channels through which His virtue flows. It is Him you want to meet every need—none but Jesus. In the solitude or the throng, in the routine of daily duty or the calmness of the closet, in sickness or in health, in sorrow or in joy, in living

or in dying, let your heart be filled with one desire, one thought, one aim—to *touch Jesus*. This one thought filled this woman's soul to the exclusion of every other, from the very moment the name of Jesus sounded in her ears. All else seemed as nothing in comparison. Reader, may her history be yours and mine !

Oh, speak of Jesus !—other names
Have lost for me their interest now ;
His is the only one that claims
To be an antidote for woe :
It falls like music on the ear,
When nothing else can soothe or cheer.

Oh, speak of Jesus !—of His power
As perfect God, and perfect man,
Which day by day, and hour by hour,
As He wrought out the wondrous plan,
Led Him as God to save and heal—
As man, to sympathise and feel.

Yes, speak of Jesus !—of His grace,
Receiving, pardoning, blessing all :
His holy, spotless life retrace—
His words, His miracles recall ;
The words He spoke, the truths He taught,
With life, eternal life, are fraught.

Oh, speak of Jesus !—of His death,
For us He lived, for us He died ;
“Tis finished !” with His latest breath,
The Lord Jehovah Jesus cried :
That death of shame and agony
Won life, eternal life, for me.

Yes, speak of Jesus, while mine ear
Can listen to a human voice !
That name my parting soul will cheer,
Will bid me e'en in death rejoice ;
Then prove, when these clay bonds are riven,
My passport at the gates of heaven.

III.

JESUS AT THE GRAVE OF BETHANY.

JOHN xi. 39-46.

THE brother of two fond sisters, the last earthly stay of human affection, lay in the cold damp grave. Desolation reigned in the heart and home of a once bright and joyous household. The pall of sorrow spread its mantle over the lovely village of Bethany; for the worm had withered its most beautiful gourd, and it lay seared and lifeless on the ground.

Worst of all, He who loved them with more than a brother's love—the Resurrection and the Life—lingered on His way. Straining eyes and breaking hearts were there, yet still He lingered. The mourners gaze upon each other with anxious looks, as they strive in vain to unravel the baffling enigma. Still He comes not. One, two, three long and weary days pass by in anxious suspense, and then His coming is announced. Hush the unkind reproach. Subdue the bitter feeling. Love

lingers behind the dark cloud. Trust and be still.

“God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform ;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.”

Do we want an evidence that love lay deeply enshrined in that holy bosom? Behold, He weeps! Love and sorrow blend together in that godlike countenance. He weeps—to see the power of sin and death over one He loved so fondly. He weeps—because others wept round that grave; for in Him human sympathy had its perfection. He weeps—to see the unbelief around Him, that knows Him not as the Resurrection and the Life. He weeps; let us stand by and weep with Him—weep while we rejoice, and learn holy lessons at the graveside of Bethany.

Christ is the Resurrection and the Life of those spiritually dead as well as naturally. The same power raises both. The same means, the word of Jesus, are effectual in each case. The subjects too are in the same state. Whether naturally or spiritually, they are without life. This is the great want which none but He who is the Resurrection and the Life can give. In this narrative, then, we see—

I. Lazarus in the grave,—a figure of the believer before conversion.

II. Lazarus raised, but bound with grave-clothes,

—a figure of the Christian having spiritual life, but not walking in the power of it.

III. Lazarus loosed,—a figure of the Christian as God would have him be.

“Jesus said, Take ye away the stone.” Let us mark here who is to do the first work. The stone must be removed before the Lord will speak the word that shall give life to the dead. It is quite true that He who did the greater work—give life to the dead, could have done the lesser work—remove the stone. But He did not. Man has to do something first. God does not work by miracles in quickening the soul. He works through means. He works through the Gospel. He acts through human instrumentality. “How shall they hear without a preacher?” God raises up His instruments to act. He opens His channels to let the floods flow over the dry ground. He puts the treasure in “earthen vessels.” Why? “That the excellency of the power may be of God, and *not of us.*” What are these stones, then, that hinder the spiritually dead from coming forth? They are many. We may sum them all up in one word—whatever it may be that hinders the spiritually dead from hearing the word of Jesus, that hinders them from coming forth to the light, or that keeps them from the presence of Jesus—no matter what it may be that operates in this way, it is a “stone.” We must do our part in this matter. We must take these stones out

of their way. There is no merit in this. Oh no,—none! The sinner is as dead when the stone has been rolled away as he was before. It is not our rolling away the stone that can give life, or that can in any way *help* to give life. Life is in Jesus—in Him only. If we could remove every stone out of the way of the spiritually dead, without the word of Jesus they would still be as dead as ever. Nevertheless, we must remove these stones. The Lord is present—present in all His power as the Resurrection and the Life; and so soon as our work is done, He will do His. He gives us this work to do for Him, as a test of our obedience, of our love and devotedness to Him. He can do His work just as well without; but He selects His people as the honoured instruments, in order that both sower and reaper may rejoice together. Thus, while His grace is seen in giving life to the dead, His wisdom and love are seen in using the “earthen vessels” through which it may be conveyed.

And who is to remove the stone? Not the poor corpse. How can it do it? Not the spiritually dead. How can they remove it? Who then? The *living* ones who stand with Jesus round the grave. Those who have life within themselves, and who see the spiritually dead lying beneath their stones, may hear the Spirit whispering each one in his own ear, “Take ye away the stone.” Go to that poor outcast lying in sin, and take away

whatever hinders him from hearing the voice of Jesus. If he cannot *come* within the sound of redeeming love, take away the stone,—go and carry it to him. Go to that proud straitlaced Pharisee, or that nominal professor of religion, or that half-starved wretch huddled up in the dens of St. Giles's, or that besotted being who inhales no other air than that of the dram-shop or the gin-palace, or that benighted savage who lies in the track of the car of Juggernaut,—go to these, and take away the stones that stand between them and the Saviour. This will prove your love to His cause. This will show that you are in earnest, that you value the souls of your fellow-creatures. This will show that our religion is not dreamy sentimentalism, that begins and ends with a sigh when such pictures are presented to our view. This will show that we are “true men,” true disciples of Christ—that we have something within us of the mind of Him who came down from heaven to suffer, bleed, and die for such rebels as ourselves. This will bring a blessing on our own souls, such as we have never yet experienced. In blessing others we shall be blessed ourselves. It is for this reason God has been so long and so often saying to us, as we have stood by the grave-sides of the Lazaruses of our crowded cities and towns and villages, yea, and is saying to us now louder than ever, “Take ye away the stone.” Christian reader, whoever you are, whatever you

are, or wherever you are, so long as you are in this world, you are standing with Jesus at the grave-side of some Lazarus. Hear His voice speaking to you, "Take ye away the stone." Go to that brother or sister, that relative or neighbour, that neglected Sunday-school class, or that cause of God about to be abandoned for lack of help,—go to them, and take away the stone. Jesus is at that grave-side, and only waits for your obedience to give life to the dead, and to pour a blessing on your own soul also. Go, my brother or sister, as the voice of Jesus falls on your ears, and see if He will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing. High or low, rich or poor, young or old, in the mansion or in the cellar—if you are a child of God you have a work to do for Him. Ask not *where* it is or *what* it is, but look around and see it at your very door. Hear the voice of Jesus speaking to you at the grave-side of some poor sinner sleeping beneath his stone of sin—"Take ye away the stone." Up, and work for God. Ask Him to show you *where* to go, *what* to do, and *how* to do it. The *start* made in God's strength and for His glory is the work more than half done. Dream not away your precious moments in sloth or sentimentalism or by pleading various excuses. Show your love for the Lord Jesús by your works. Show your love for your fellow-sinners by being up and doing. Hear the voice of Jesus sounding in your ears in

the midst of all your pleas and excuses, "Take ye away the stone."

"Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days." How many are there who re-echo Martha's unbelieving words. "Oh, such cases are hopeless." "He is too far gone in sin to do any good with him." "It is only throwing pearls before swine." "What can *I*—a poor, weak, helpless creature do, in the way of raising men so corrupt, so far gone in spiritual death, so utterly inaccessible to every religious or moral influence?" What are all these but the unbelieving shadow of Martha's own heart, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days?" What are all these but the echo of Jeremiah's unbelief, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child?" Hear the answer of God—"Say not, I am a child." "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." Hear the voice of Jesus, "Take ye away the stone." "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" The flesh looks at itself, or at the corrupt body before it, or at the *circumstances* by which it is surrounded, and says, "I cannot speak." Faith looks at Jesus and beholds the mightiest things of the world bending

before its own weakness. Nature looks at Lazarus and says, "By this time he stinketh." Faith looks at Jesus, and exclaims, "My brother shall rise again." The moment we come under the influence of nature or the circumstances by which we are surrounded, that moment all effort is paralysed, all devotedness to Christ, all love for the immortal souls lying beneath the ten thousand stones of sin around us, is gone, and gone for ever. Look at Jesus, and go forward. Look at Jesus, and act. Look at Jesus, and "the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark." Look at Jesus, and then the *child* shall "root out, and pull down, and destroy, and build up, and plant." "Take ye away the stone." "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" With God all things are possible. What though the body "stinketh?" what though you are "a child?" it is thus that the Son of God is glorified. It is in such impossible cases as you suppose that His name is magnified. "My grace is sufficient," is God's answer to every plea of weakness; for "my strength is made perfect in weakness." The battle is not yours but the Lord's. You are but an "earthen vessel," the feeble instrument that *should* dwindle into insignificance by His side. But remember the secret of your strength—*Jesus* is at the grave-side. "They shall fight against thee; but they shall not *prevail* against

thee: for *I am with thee* to deliver thee, saith the Lord."

"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me. And I knew that Thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me." They took away the stone. This is all that the living ones can do. Having done this, it is no longer a question in which *they* are concerned—it is one between God and Satan. They have done their work, and all the rest is God's. His the responsibility, His the work, His the glory throughout eternity. But let us remember it is a Divine work. The work of giving life to the dead, whether spiritually or naturally, is one in which the *triune* God is engaged. Those who stood by the graveside of Bethany, as well as those who came after, might so attribute the entire glory of that work to the Saviour *as man* as to lose sight of Him who sent Him. This He would never allow while on earth. Though God essentially, with all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, yet did He come from heaven to honour His Father. It was to guard against this view that He lifted up His eyes to heaven,—“because of the people which *stand by* I said it, that they may believe that *Thou hast sent me.*” His oneness with the Father—His perfect

and uninterrupted communion with Him even while moving in scenes and circumstances so defiling as ours, is shown by the opening words of His prayer, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou *hast heard me.*" This uninterrupted communion *we* never can have here, because we have sinful souls and bodies marring our fellowship. But *He* had it always, from His holy nature. Nothing *could* disturb His communion—"I knew that Thou hearest me *always*"—but the more we see Him and follow in His steps, the less will our communion with Him be hindered. "These things write we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

"And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin." Here is the picture of the believer possessing spiritual life, but not walking in the power of that life. The Lazarus, whether spiritually or naturally thus bound hand and foot, is not in the state God would have him to be. This is one stage in the believer's spiritual resurrection. How many are there with life in their souls, but that is all we can say of them? There are so many of the trappings of spiritual death about them, so many shadows of their former state, that we can scarcely recognise them as the Lord's children. They are

bound hand and foot with the grave-clothes of habit, of disposition, of mind, and spirit, with so much of the earth, that they cannot walk in the liberty of the Spirit. They are crippled, manacled, bandaged Christians, having their eyes and hearts covered over with the napkins of the world. They are strangers to many of the joys and hopes and consolations of heaven. There is no mark of heaven on them outwardly. There is no inward peace from the assurance of a finished salvation. There is little communion with God. They are, like Lazarus, so bound about that they are a clog to themselves and to the world in which they live. This is not the state God would have them to be in. Did He give Lazarus life that he should lie bound at the grave-side? No. He gave him life that he should *enjoy* that life, that he should walk in the fullest liberty, free from all the ties and bands of death and the grave. Even so has He given the believer spiritual life that he should walk in the power of it, that he should enjoy it, that he should be the Lord's freeman. For this he was redeemed, and for this only. Ah, how many a spiritual Lazarus is content to lie at the grave-side, bound with the fetters of his former state! Hear, O grave-side believer, the voice of Jesus sounding in your ears, "Loose him, and let him go." This is the state the Lord would have you be in—rising above the trammels of the world, bursting the fetters of

habit and sin, walking in the *power* of that life which He has given you, without a link in the chain to draw you back. "Loose him, and let him go." Hear it, and burst your chains. Hear it, and walk in the light. Hear it, and live for Christ. Hear it, and fulfil your high and holy vocation. Scorn to lie at the grave-side all your days, a spiritual cripple. Rise, and walk worthy of your high calling. "And ye which are spiritual, restore such in the spirit of meekness, considering yourselves also." Ye living ones who stand round the grave-sides of this world, in the presence of Jesus, and behold these spiritual Lazaruses bound hand and foot, "Loose them, and let them go." Help to break their fetters. Try and burst their bonds. Help them up from the ground on which they are lying. Bring home to their hearts "the truth as it is in Jesus." Strive to enlighten the mind, to cheer the spirit, to strengthen the weak, to encourage the drooping, and to restore the fallen. Hear the voice of Jesus not only saying, "Take ye away the stone," but also, "Loose him, and let him go." So act, and your own souls shall receive a blessing. So act, and be like Jesus.

"Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, *believed on Him*. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and *told them* what things Jesus had done." The presence of the Lord Jesus, wherever mani-

fested in life-giving power, has always the same effects—God is glorified and the devil is stirred up. Some believed, but some went their way and told the Pharisees. To the present hour it is the same. God is working, and wherever He works Satan is sure to be working too. Wherever Christ went He was the life of the world. Death could not stand in His presence. Lazarus *must* live. He was also the light, which manifested everything. He brought to the surface man's needs and man's enmity. He developed what was in the heart. He showed us a picture of darkness and death that we should never have known or conceived but for the light of His holy presence. Satan in all his enmity was brought on to the stage, just because *He* was there.

Reader, this instructive chapter brings before us two holy and practical lessons :

Who alone could say, "Take ye away the stone?"—Jesus. Who alone could give life to the dead?—Jesus. Who alone could say, "Loose him and let him go?"—Jesus. Who did *all* here?—Jesus. It is the same now. Do we want spiritual life? Only Jesus can give it. Do we want power to roll away the stone? Jesus alone can give it. Do we want strength to cast off every earthly fetter, and to walk in newness of life? Only Jesus can give it. Do we want wisdom, meekness, and love to unloose the bonds from others? Jesus alone can give them. Let us remember this, and go to Him.

Let us wait on Him for everything. In sorrow or joy, in sickness or health, living or dying, may He be the sun of our existence, the spiritual orbit around which we live and move and have our being.

Secondly, where was Lazarus next seen? Only once again in life's history do we see him or hear of him, and that is *in company with Jesus* (chap. xii. ver. 2). The curtain falls *there*. Reader, if the curtain fell, would it fall upon you *walking with God*? As you go through life and its changing, troubled scenes, is it the last place people see you in? Is this the impression left on the minds of those with whom you mingle? This is readiness to meet the Lord. This is the place in which to meet death. This is the armour in which to encounter Satan. This is the shield, the helmet, the breastplate, wherewith to stand in the battle of life—the presence of Jesus. Reader, may this be your place and mine now, and whenever the Lord may send for us, for Jesus Christ's sake!

“FOLLOW THOU ME.”

Jesus, we heard Thee say it,
That deep, unfathom'd word,
And we told Thee we were willing
To call Thee Master and Lord.
We gave Thee our allegiance
With true and loyal mind,
We assayed to follow after,
But no footsteps could we find.

The desert dust is shifting,
 The storms are wild and rude.
 Where men once saw Thee walking,
 The sand-drifts may be strewed ;
 Or is it that life's surgings
 Have worn those prints away ?
 Or are these eyes too misty
 To trace them day by day ?

My disciples, my servants, my friends !
 Ye who listened and heard that word :
 Oh ! where, in what foreign country,
 Have ye thought to find your Lord ?
 The footprints are marked as ever,
 The steps of the Son of God,
 No lapse of years can erase them,
 Deep set in tears and blood.

But the road was too rough and rugged,
 And some coward hearts drew back ;
 Ye found one more smooth and sunny,
 But ye lost the Master's track.
 Ye have been amid wealth and pleasure,
 But no traces could ye see ;
 Ye have walked in earth's proudest dwellings,
 They had no room for me.

The world with its choicest pictures,
 Its jewels rich and rare,
 Has found you a place and a portion,
 But I was a stranger there.
 Ye sleep on its downy pillows,
 Its couches of sloth and ease,
 But I was a homeless pilgrim,
 I had nothing to do with these.

Ye bask in its smiles of welcome,
 It had only a frown for me—
 A rejected Man of Sorrows,
 I was nailed to the cursed tree.—

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Ah ! surely 'twere hard to follow
Where the Master was never seen,
'Twere hard to trace the waymarks
Where His feet have never been.

Have ye looked for sheep in the desert,
For those who have missed their way ?
Have ye been in the wild waste places,
Where the lost and the wandering stray ?
Have ye trodden the lonely highway,
The foul and darksome street ?
It may be ye'd see in the gloaming
The print of my wounded feet.

Have ye carried the living water
To the parched and thirsty soul ?
Have ye said to the sick and wounded,
" Christ Jesus makes thee whole ? "
Have ye told my fainting children
Of the strength of the Father's hand ?
Have ye guided the tottering footsteps
To the shores of the " Golden Land ? "

Have ye stood by the sad and weary,
To smooth the pillow of death ;
To comfort the sorrow-stricken,
And strengthen the feeble faith ?
And have ye felt when the glory
Has streamed through the open door,
And flitted across the shadows,
That I had been there before ?

Have ye wept with the broken-hearted
In their agony of woe ?
Ye might hear me whispering beside you,
" Tis a pathway I often go !
My disciples, my brethren, my friends,
Can ye dare to follow me ?
Then, wherever the Master dwelleth,
There shall the servant be !

C. P.

IV.

JESUS IN THE SUPPER CHAMBER.

JOHN xiii. 1-18.

THE portion of Scripture I have selected for consideration brings before our notice one of the most important subjects in the Word of God—the intercession of Christ, and its blessed results to the children of God. By many it is overlooked; by others it is not understood. In these cases two striking features of character are manifested. In those who overlook it, there is carelessness of walk; in those who do not understand it, there is often no abiding peace, no unhindered fellowship with the Father and the Son.

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross and its precious results is one thing, the priesthood of Christ is quite another. It is the nature and operations of the latter which so many fail to apprehend, and to which we would now call the reader's attention.

We must always bear in mind that the great effect of the sacrifice of Christ, the one offering

once offered for sin, is to place the believer in a relation to God that nothing can change. By it he becomes a son of God. That is henceforth the relation in which he stands and from which nothing can remove him. Let us not suppose that when he is overtaken by sin—I say *overtaken*—he is no longer a child of God, that the relationship, in which he stood is altered. You may as well say that when a child does something wrong he ceases to be the father's child. No; the relationship remains the same under all circumstances. So is it with God's people. Nothing can change their relationship. It is this that invests that relationship with such a solemn responsibility. It lays the believer under a responsibility from which he is never free. If that relationship could be changed, then would his responsibility cease; then would he be free to act as he pleased—to serve the devil or God. It is the knowledge of this relationship that lays him under an obligation to live at all times and under all circumstances to the glory of God. We cannot insist too strongly on this, for all the blessings, all the promises, and all the commands of God's word are based upon it. We dwell upon it here because it is the key to the interpretation of the portion of Scripture on which we have entered.

But if nothing—not even being overtaken in sin—can change the relationship in which the child

of God stands to his heavenly Father, what is the effect of sin? May he go on in sin? Is he to have nothing to say to it? Is nothing to be done with it? Reader, rest assured that if *we* have nothing to do with our daily sins and shortcomings, they will very soon have something to do with *us*. Ah! the man who can say or think such a thing is *very far* gone from God. What should we think of a child who would say, "It does not matter what I do to my father?" Should we not say, it was an unnatural child—that it was in a profane state of affection? Would not all the feelings of a child in relation to its parent have gone? Would not the absence of such feelings be the ultimate cause of its ruin? If it had nothing to say to *sin*, would not sin very soon have something to say to *it*, either in the prison or on the gallows? Yes, reader, these sins have a great deal to say to us, and we have a great deal to say to them. But this we must bear in mind, that it is just in proportion as we apprehend our unchanging relationship to God, that we shall know what we have to do with them. The more clearly we see and enter into that relationship, the more sinful will they appear, the more grievous will they be. It is the child who knows its relationship to its father and *values* it that will feel every wrong done to him *most keenly*. We come to feel the heinous character of sin so little, because we see not the relationship in which we stand to Him against

whom it is committed. What then is done with these sins, and what do they with us? The portion of Scripture under consideration will, under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, teach us.

There are two prominent subjects which are the burden of this portion of Scripture, namely—the believer's completeness in the finished work of Jesus, and the trespasses of his daily life; and they are presented to our notice under a very expressive symbol or figure. They are both comprehended in one verse—"He that is *washed* needeth not save to *wash his feet*, but is clean *every whit*." The figure or symbol is more clearly perceived by the translation of the verse from the original—"He that cometh up out of *the bath* is clean *every whit*, and needeth not save to *wash his feet*." Our blessed Lord evidently compared His finished work on Calvary to having been washed *in the bath*. It has made the child of God clean *every whit*. It has made him a child—placed him in that relationship which nothing can change. Henceforward all that can contract defilement is—not his person—but his *feet*. Henceforth he is pardoned, forgiven, accepted, "complete in Him." But he is represented while going through this world as coming up out of the bath. In his passage, the feet come into necessary contact with the world; his daily walk—symbolised by the feet—contracts defilement. These must be washed. For this purpose

Christ is now in heaven. It is this that is brought before us in the portion of Scripture we are considering.!

“Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them *to the end.*” The very fact of the Lord washing the disciples’ feet was another evidence of His love to them. It is here set before us as such. The expression “to the end” signifies not only to the end of all *time*, precious as that thought is; it means more. It has reference to the washing of the feet. It means that He loved them *through everything*. “Having loved” them when they were sinners, rebels, haters of God, He loved them through all this, and as sinning, wandering, backsliding *children*. He loved them with a full view of what they *were*, and also with a full view of what they *would be*—“to the end”—as far as love could go. The evidence of this was the act in which He was about to engage—the washing of their feet, and what it symbolised. He saw what they were, and yet He would *die* for them. He saw what they would be afterwards, and yet He would *live* for them. This was love—“to the end”—love through everything. Oh, wondrous, perfect love of Jesus! Who can estimate it? Who can measure its height or depth, its length or breadth? Not here shall

we ever know its perfection and fulness. Not *here* but *there*—

“When I stand before the throne
Dressed in beauty not my own ;
When I see Thee as Thou art,
Love Thee with unsinning heart ;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then how much I owe.”

But we learn from the Lord's words the necessity for this washing of the feet. He says to Peter, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me ;” that is to say, “All those for whom I have died have a part with me, and must have their feet washed. If, therefore, I do not wash your feet, you are not one of those for whom I have died, you have not been in the bath, you are not mine, you have ‘no part with me’—you are still dead in trespasses and sins.” Here we perceive the great end for which He came into the world—that all His people should have a part with Him ; and the great evidence that they *had* that part with Him was the fact of His washing their feet—interceding for them in heaven, removing from them all their daily defilements. This He was going to show them by this very act. This is the reason it is said, “When Jesus knew that *His hour was come that He should depart out of this world* to the Father,” and “having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them *to the end*.” He was

going away, and before He went He must show them that He not only came to *die* for them but that He was going to *live* for them—their great High-priest in heaven. He was going away, but before He went He must show them by this symbolical act that He not only loved them as sinners, by dying for them, but that He loved them with a full view of what they *would be*—as sinful, wandering *children*. We see this more clearly by the following words, “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself.” He was about to enter into His Father’s glory. He “*knew*” He was. For this cause He rose up and began this significant act. What does this show us? That doing it as He was about to enter that glory, and with a full view of that glory before Him, He would *continue* it when He had entered into it. Combining this with His own words to Peter, it becomes clearer still—“What I do thou knowest not *now*; but thou shalt know hereafter.” Let us not resolve this act into a mere *example of humility*. It was that doubtless, but it was much more than that. As an example of humility Peter evidently understood it, from his indignant remonstrance, “Thou shalt never wash my feet.” As an example of humility *only*, it would not have been correct to

say, "thou *knowest not* now." Peter *did* know that. But he did not know the far deeper meaning—the intercession in heaven. The Lord says to him, "You do not know this now, but you shall know it *hereafter*," that is, so soon as the Spirit should come down in the Lord's place and teach it him. Besides, as a mere *example* of humility, see what a strange anomaly we are reduced to,—“If I wash thee not,” if I do not set before you this example of humility, “you have no part with me,” no inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. Is it the Saviour's example of humility that is our title to heaven? Surely it was an example of humility; but who can read the Lord's words here and not see a clear allusion to something deeper? Reader, meditate on this portion of Scripture, with an unbiassed mind and after earnest prayer for the teaching of God's Holy Spirit. Take not up *my* judgment here, but listen to what God says, then you will not go wrong.

“Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” The idea of not having a part in Christ fills the disciple with horror. To miss this evidence of it from the Saviour Himself he cannot endure. Anything rather than this. But at the same time, his words show very plainly what the Lord had told him, “What I do thou *knowest not*

now." He did not see what the Lord meant by this act. He should know it after the Spirit had descended; "for He shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." He did not need a renewal of the Sacrifice to wash away his defilements; he did not need to go into the *bath* again. His trespasses, whatever they might be, could not change his relationship to God. They could not un-Christianise him. All he required was the feet to be washed by the great High-priest. This the Lord now shows him: "He that cometh up out of *the bath* is clean *every whit*, and needeth not save to wash his feet." "You stand in the position of one who has come out of the bath. You are clean *every whit*, by virtue of the efficacy of my one offering for sin; but you must have your daily defilements removed from you by my intercession as the great High-priest." This is what the Lord seems to say.

The truth of our relationship to God being unchanged by our daily defilements, is beautifully shadowed forth by the priests under the Jewish dispensation. When they were prepared for their holy office, and arrayed in their priestly garments, they were never removed from their holy place of service. They were priests there at all times and under all circumstances. Their hands and feet, however, were continually defiled by the blood of the sacrifices. What were they to do? Were they

unpriested? By no means. There was placed between the brazen altar and the most holy place where they were serving, the laver. In this they washed their hands and feet, and returned again to their place of service within the veil. So is it now, dear Christian reader. You are washed. You are a priest unto God. Nothing can change your relationship to God as His child. All you need is that your daily life be washed in the true laver—the intercession of Christ Jesus on your behalf.

But *how* does Christ, as our great High-priest, cleanse our daily defilements? The necessary contact of the *feet* with the earth—of the soul with the world and the things of the world—tends to draw a veil between us and God. Besides this, we are continually overtaken in things positively evil. Evil thoughts, unholy tempers, unguarded expressions, crooked conduct, inordinate affections—perhaps worse than even these. These draw a cloud between the soul and God. They disturb the peace of the conscience. They place us at a distance from God. We are out of communion with Him. We have fallen, and we *feel* it. We dare not look up. An unaccountable earthliness has come over the spirit. We feel as if we were dead to all spiritual life. These are the defilements of the feet upon us. Oh, how bitterly we feel them! Sorrow overwhelms us. We go to the feet of our great High-priest. “He ever liveth to make inter-

cession *for us*—to remove these defilements. How does He do it? He gives us a *fresh view* of His one offering—His precious, ever-speaking blood on the altar on high. By this view we see our defilements removed. *We see again* that we are accepted, beloved, pardoned, forgiven. The sight restores us. We feel all our sins are gone. We feel, too, that all our defilements are gone. The great High-priest has restored our souls. We are again happy. We are again brought into communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. All is changed now. All was cloud and darkness before; now all is sunshine. What has done it? The great High-priest has done it, by His Holy Spirit giving us a *fresh view* of that one offering that hath “perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Our sins *obscured* this view, and made us unhappy. He has removed *them*, and the cloud *along with* them—He has washed our feet.

One point more in this beautiful portion of Scripture. “So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said to them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not

greater than his lord ; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." If Christ has washed our feet, and if He *continues* to wash them, surely, dear Christian reader, we should do the same. How can *we* do this? Exactly as He does it for us—by removing from the heart and conscience of His people anything that makes them unhappy ; by removing, as far as we are able, all defilement from the mind, and restoring it to communion with God ; by comforting them in sorrow, by bearing with their infirmities, weaknesses, and failings ; by gentle reproof and loving rebuke, and by praying for them. In these and many other ways we can comfort the heart, enlighten the mind, restore the soul, rejoice the spirit—we can wash their feet. Let us not be like poor Peter here, and say to each other, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Let us not think such offices too low. Let us bend, let us stoop, let us lay aside the garment, let us take the towel, bind it to us, and carry it with us everywhere, as true followers and servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let no pride or rank or social distinction *qualify* this plain command. See the Lord of glory bending at the feet of the fishermen of Galilee! Let us keep the picture before us, and remember that "the servant is not greater than his lord ; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him." Let us remember His closing

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words, "If ye know these things, *happy are ye if ye do them.*"

And what will enable us to "*do them?*" Let us see what influenced the Saviour here: "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hand, and *that He was come from God, and went to God*; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself." There were two things before Him here—His high dignity and relationship, and the prospect of the glory into which He was about to enter. These made Him take this place as the servant of His people. Why is it that there is so little of this washing of one another's feet now, so much disinclination on the part of the people of God towards it? Oh, it is because we realise so little of our high dignity and relationship to God as His sons and daughters, and so feebly apprehend the glory that is before us. The more we enter into these blessed realities, the more ready shall we be to bind the towel about us, and go forth as the Lord's disciples and servants to this holy work. In the doing of that work we shall know what it is to be "happy," to participate in His joy, and shall understand and enter into the full meaning of His blessed word.

Christian reader, you have been called unto liberty. You see the exalted relationship into which the finished work of Jesus has brought you.

But beware that you use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh. Take care that you have to do with your sins, or else they will very quickly have something to do with you. Beware of sin. Take every film and stain and sin, *the moment it is committed*, to your great High-priest; then all will go well. If you do not, it will raise a cloud between you and God. It will blunt your spiritual sensitiveness to the heinous character of sin. It will make the slippery path more slippery still. It will encrust the heart. It will leave you without any visible mark on your daily life as a testimony for God. You will gradually lose your sense of pardon. You will begin to question God's love to you. You will begin to doubt your acceptance with Him. Prayer, in its spirit, will yield; communion with God will yield; every outward and visible mark of heaven upon you will yield, and you yourself will be a spiritual wreck on the shores of this soul-blighting world. Oh, beware of sin! "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

J E S U S.

We heard it in the distance
Of long prophetic years,
Like one strange note of gladness,
'Mid wailings, sighs, and tears.

Like snatches of soft music,
From harps with golden strings;

Kept echoing by the fanning
Of far-off angel wings.

Nearer—a little nearer,
As centuries roll'd by,
And yet no lips could utter
The voiceless melody.

Earth listen'd 'mid her groanings,
And own'd her coming Lord ;
But heaven and hell were waiting
To hear the unspoken word.

O Gabriel ! was that mission
Almost too vast for thee,
The key-note of hope's message,
To man's lost family ?

Methinks it were stupendous
For angel-lips to frame
The yet unuttered utterance
Of that Almighty name.

And as it fell and echoed,
With new and wondrous sound,
On—on, thro' earth and heaven
To hell's remotest bound.

Was there a thrill of meaning
Too deep for seraph choirs ;
A trembling hush of silence,
Brooding o'er golden lyres ?

Ye loved it as ye spoke it,
But it was not for you
To read the hidden mystery,
Or spell the letters true.

It needs man's depth of ruin—
It needs a sinner's woe,
To measure God's salvation,
To learn what love can do.

Bright ones ! we'll take it from you,
The message of His grace ;
Eyes that have wept, can read it—
Seen in Emmanuel's face.

Hearts that have ached can feel it,
As it lifts them from the grave,
And points to hope and Heaven—
Since Jesus died to save.

We'll take it to the guilty,
They need the cleansing blood ;
The hand outstretch'd for sinners
Can lead them back to God.

We'll take it to the dying
'Mid the shadow's thickest gloom ;
The Living One hath conquer'd,
There is sunlight in the tomb.

We'll take it to the weary,
Vex'd with the battle-strife,
And point them to the calmness
Of a never-ending life.

And then we'll sing it with you,
When eternity's begun,
And tell you in the glory,
What Jesu's name hath done.

V.

JESUS AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS.

JOHN xxi.

THE soul that possesses Christ carries within itself the Divine panacea for every evil. Where there is not a firm fixture on this foundation, the heart of man must ever be subject to fluctuation, and carry within itself a tendency to doubt and despair. To know Christ experimentally as our Saviour and our God ; to know Him as having followed us when "afar off," found us and brought us home to His fold ; to know Him as having forgiven all *our* sins, —this is peace, this is joy, this is the soul's secret strength, light in the midst of its darkness, an anchor that holds it fast, amid all the tumultuous heavings of life's troubled sea, the hope entering within the veil, laying hold of the great Forerunner, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The chapter we have selected for consideration brings this before us in its opening words. Let us mark them carefully. May we learn again what

we have so often learned before, and cannot learn too deeply, the Spirit's lesson taught us in this portion of the Word—the all-sufficiency of Christ for every state of man's heart.

“After these things, Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and on this wise showed He Himself.” The word “again” calls our attention to the previous manifestations of Christ after His resurrection, and recorded in the preceding chapter. The first was to Mary at the sepulchre, the second to the disciples in the upper room, the third to Thomas, and the fourth to the entire band on the shore of Tiberias. These four parties to whom the Saviour presented Himself, are the representatives of four great classes of people in the world. And in connection with this view of the subject, we press upon the reader the significance of the expression in the opening words of this chapter, “Jesus showed *Himself*.” Mark how the showing of “Himself,” on each of these occasions, was all that was required to give peace, joy, gladness, and perfect satisfaction to the heart.

In Mary at the sepulchre we have the type of the mourner—the suffering, sorrowing, broken-hearted one. The Saviour simply revealed “Himself” to her through the sound of her own name, and every tear was dry, and the heart glad and happy.

In the disciples, in the upper room, waiting for

Christ, with the doors shut about them for fear of persecution, we have a type of the waiting ones,—the tried, tempted, persecuted, rejected ones ; those who are struggling between hope and fear, hoping in spite of hope, impeded in the path by foes from without and fears from within, yet pressing on to God. To these the Saviour simply showed “Himself,” through the medium of the wounded hands and the bruised side, and all was joy and gladness. “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.”

In Thomas, we have the type of another class—the doubting, fearing, unbelieving one ; the wandering, backsliding one ; the one who *cannot* believe unless all is plain, demonstrative, tangible. To him the Saviour simply showed “Himself,” and we are told that Thomas exclaimed, in the fulness of his joy, “My Lord and my God.”

In the entire band of disciples, just returned from their fruitless night of toil on the lake, we have the type of another class—the toiling, the weary, the disappointed ones ; the hungry, needy, helpless ones ; the toilers throughout the long, dark night, with empty vessels, disappointed hopes, and fainting hearts. To these the Saviour simply shows “Himself,” and all is fulness of joy—the satisfaction of every need, and the reaping of an abundant harvest.

Oh, how true it is that the heart of man needs

only to see Jesus! Whatever its state may be, whether that of Mary mourning for some loved one who has left our hearth and homestead, never to be seen again till the morning of resurrection; whether that of the waiting disciples, in doubt, and fear, and dread, still hoping on and pressing through the foes by which we are surrounded; whether like Thomas, unbelieving, backsliding, sinful; or whether, like the disciples on the shore, toiling year after year with no fruit to our labours—all the poor heart needs to see is Jesus. Yes, “only Jesus” is the Church’s cry. Let Him present Himself to the heart, and all will be well. Then will it be filled with joy and gladness, and repose on His bosom with perfect rest.

And in this last manifestation of Christ we have a prophetic lesson brought before us. It is a type of what is yet before the Church. It has its spiritual fulfilment now in the history of each believer. It shall have its literal fulfilment in the morning of the resurrection. The mourning, the waiting, the unbelieving ones, are to be satisfied with Christ now. The toilers through the dark night—the hungry, weary, and disappointed ones, are also to be satisfied with Jesus now. But in the morning of resurrection there shall be a full supply, an abundant harvest, an overflowing reward, that shall richly repay all the toil and labour of this dark night, through which we are passing. We shall

reach the long wished for "shore," and there meet Him whom we have known of old. He shall then open to His toiling ones all the treasures of His love, and grace, and mercy. Every mouth shall be filled. Every heart shall be satisfied. Every song shall resound to the riches of His grace.

But mark another truth in this verse—"Jesus *showed* Himself." Man can never see the Saviour till the Spirit of God reveals that Saviour to him. Jesus must *show* Himself, or we shall see no beauty in Him that we should admire Him. How strikingly this truth is confirmed in the four cases we have referred to. Mark it well, dear reader, and may God write it on your heart. Mary stood at the Saviour's very side, but she knew Him not. Not till He "*showed* Himself" in the word "Mary," did she see Him. The Saviour stood in the midst of the disciples in the upper room; but they knew Him not. St. Luke tells us, "they were affrighted, and supposed they had seen a spirit" (chap. xxiv., 37th verse). Not till the Saviour "*showed* Himself" through His wounded hands and bruised side, did they see Him. Then, but not till then, "were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." So also with Thomas. The Saviour was at his side, but he knew Him not. Not till the Lord "*showed* Himself" in the words, "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side," did Thomas exclaim

out of the fulness of his heart, "My Lord and my God!" And so also with the disciples on the shore of Tiberias. The Lord stood in their midst, yet *not one* of them knew Him. This is expressly stated. "But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore; but *the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.*" Not till the Saviour "showed Himself" in the draught of fishes did one of them exclaim, "It is the Lord!" Oh, when will men learn this solemn truth so clearly brought before us in these cases, that the heart of man cannot see Christ till Christ reveals Himself to it! "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God [and the seeing Christ as his Saviour is one of them], for they are foolishness unto him: neither CAN he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Reader, with all your profession of religion, if the Spirit of God has not shown you the Saviour, you are still in ignorance, in darkness, in *death*. You cannot of yourself see Jesus. You cannot of yourself see your true state before God as a sinner. You cannot of yourself see the blackness, the vileness, the *awful depravity* of that heart of yours. You may readily *acknowledge* it, but have you *felt* it? Has the mountain weight of sin on your secret heart forced from your lips the agonizing cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" If not, your general acknowledgment of sin is only

a mockery—a solemn mockery of God. Your knowledge is of the *head*, not of the *heart*. Your religion is a subterfuge, a mask, a superficial covering that can never bear the searching eye of a holy God. And this must continue till God the Spirit “show” Jesus to you.

But how “show” Him? Show Him so that you can no longer look upon *yourself* with complacency, but with deep self-abhorrence. “Show” Him so that the whole heart be bowed down before God, and the soul cling to the Saviour as its life, its all. “Show” Him, so that the conscience, smitten under a sense of sin, will cling with delight and joy to the blood of Jesus for pardon and peace. “Show” Him, so that in the flesh shall be seen *no* good thing, but Jesus only—“the chief of ten thousand; the altogether lovely.”

Reader, solemnly, in the sight of God, I put a question to you. Permit me, as a dying man, speaking to a dying fellow-sinner, to lay my hand upon you, and ask, Has the Spirit of God thus “shown” Jesus to you? If not, of what *real* value is all your knowledge of Jesus? Would it not be far more *honest* of you to have done with the lie you are carrying in your right hand—the hollow, worthless profession of religion you are so tenaciously grasping? It may serve you for a little while. But oh, dear friend, remember the solemn meeting at the bar of God, towards which you are

daily hastening. There will be no masks there! No religious subterfuges there! Nona. The holy eye of God shall scatter them all, like chaff before the wind; and the soul shall stand in all its deformity before Him! Oh, fling away these flimsy coverings, and bow at the feet of Jesus! You like reality, honesty, before *men*. Oh, be honest yourself before *God*! Wear no hypocritical religious garb. Carry no lie in your right hand. Ask the Lord to show you your state as a sinner before Him! Ask Him to "show" you Jesus, putting away sin by His finished work on Calvary. Thus will you be a *true* man. Thus will you be a Christian,—not in name, but in reality. Thus will your eyes be open to see Jesus; and to see Jesus is everlasting life.

Child of God, remember this every step of your way to heaven—you cannot see Jesus till He "show Himself" to you. You sometimes open the Word, and you read passage after passage without profit, without comfort, without any blessing. Ah! He is teaching you the deeply needed lesson that you cannot see Him of yourself. God is always teaching us this in one way or another. We are not willing to learn it *as deeply as He would have us*. Therefore He makes us feel it. Then, how does the conviction of our ignorance force itself upon us! How is our dulness, and blindness, and earthliness of spirit disclosed to our astonished

view ! Be not discouraged, dear reader, at this. The Lord is teaching you. It is the Lord's lesson you are learning in this painful way. Be not cast down, but go in humility to His feet, and say, "Lord, teach Thou me !" "Open Thou mine eyes that I may see wondrous things out of Thy law." Show me Jesus and I shall be satisfied. Oh remember it always—the Lord must "show Himself," or you can never see Him. Wait on Him then. Wait *patiently*, but wait *continually*. It is only as He "shows Himself" your soul can learn. It is only as He "shows Himself" you can grow in grace. It is only as He "shows Himself" you can become like Him. And you will become like Him then, for you will see Him.

But now let us proceed to the remaining portion of this beautiful chapter. "There were together Simon Peter and Thomas, called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth and entered into a ship immediately." What a solemn warning are we presented with in the words of this verse ! The disciples went back again to their old calling. The Lord had drawn them from it, when He said, "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men." But no sooner is the Lord crucified, and laid in the grave, than all hope

seems to have fled. Acting under the influence of the ardent and impetuous Peter, they go back again to the very scenes and circumstances from which the Saviour had called them. For this rash step there was no excuse. The Lord had plainly declared to them, "When I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee." Their attitude should have been one of faith and patient expectation. But no. Faith has fled. Hope has died out. By a remarkable rebound they go to their old calling. Not one suggests a pause. Not one word is thought of consulting God. They took a step, leaving God out of the question altogether. Their own inclination, their own resolve, their own step—nothing else was thought of. And mark the judgment,—“that night they caught nothing.”

Reader, take heed to the warning! Learn well the solemn lesson! If you take a step without consulting God, remember what will be the consequence. It matters nothing what is the nature of that step. If you take it from choice or inclination, or because it seems a right step, and do not consult God, you will surely, either directly or indirectly, have the judgment of God resting upon it. Yours will be the painful experience, “that night they caught nothing.” Do not plead as an excuse that it is *duty*, or that it seems *right*. The sin of this act of the disciples did not consist so much in there being something *wrong* in it. It was

their worldly duty, their earthly calling. So they might have pleaded. The sin is not so much the *wrong* in the act as the taking the step *without reference to God's will*. Yours *may* be a right step; but if you take it without reference to His glory, without having *first* consulted Him, depend upon it yours will be the same result. *Time* will display to your view the handwriting on the wall, written by the finger of God over that step of yours—"that night they caught nothing." Throughout life we are bent on carrying out our own will. Man loves to be *independent*. He glories in it. He says, "Cannot I do as I like? Who shall lord it over me?" This independence, this carrying out of our own will, is essentially rebellion against God. So inveterate is this propensity, that even when we are brought to know Christ, we act in the common concerns of life, in the minutiae of each day's duties, just as if it were a matter of course that we should do as we pleased! And we are prepared to resent, as an affront, any one who would step in and tell us that we are not to do as we please! This *unconscious*, yet deeply rooted principle, is a part of our very being, and our Christianity is powerless to shake it off. We carry it into the things of God, yea, into the very presence of God. We forget that we are "bought," and that now we are no longer our own, but that body, soul, and spirit are the Lord's, the purchase of His precious blood. We

forget that not only are we ourselves "bought," but that our moments of time are "bought," our influence is "bought," our talents are "bought," our money is "bought," our very words, and thoughts, and deeds, are "bought." Yes, *all* are "bought," "*blood-bought*." We forget that we have no right to take a *walk*, except it may please God. We forget that we have no right to go to an evening party, except it may please God. We forget that anything we may do, as a matter of *right*, as the carrying out our own will and pleasure, is a *robbery* of God. It is the rebellion of a servant against his master, the revolt of a slave from the one who has purchased him. Yet how will this be resented by some! How shall we meet the cavil, the objection, the taunt, the sneer, perhaps, at such a statement as this? How do Christians *habitually* forget it, yea, *wilfully* act against it? But this must not be in God's child. He will not let it be. The characteristic of the Master was, "I came down from heaven, *not to do mine own will*, but the will of Him that sent me." The one great feature of His life was, "He pleased not Himself." As the Master was, so must the servant be. It is a hard lesson, often a *life-long* lesson, but we *must* learn it. God steps in, and says, "It may be so with the natural man, but it shall not be so with you." God says, "You shall not be independent, you shall not carry out your own will. You must be

a *dependent* creature every step of your journey. You must give up your will, and carry out mine. You must depend upon me every hour of the day, and be ready to do *my* will in every act of life." Hence the constant crossings in our daily lot, the repeated thwartings of our preconceived plans, the mournful and yet constantly repeated complaint, "Everything seems to go across with me!" Yes, because your own will, your own way, your own choice, are what you are bent on carrying out, and God will not have it. You must become like the Master. Your will must be broken and bent to God's. Your time, and plans, and pleasures, and engagements, must have constant reference to His glory. You are not prepared for this. But God *must*, God *will* see it in you, though you have to pass through the furnace to reach it.

Reader, think of this! Remember this rash step of the disciples. Remember the fatal little word, "immediately," in this verse. Mark its contrast in another passage—the first chapter of St. Paul to the Galatians, and sixteenth verse. See that every step of yours has the same reference to God's glory. Then will the experience of your soul not be, "that night they caught nothing," but that of the beloved apostle in this chapter, "they glorified God in me."

But how comforting is the truth we are taught in connection with this! "But when the morning

was now come, Jesus stood on the shore ; but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus." Though the disciples had gone wrong, though they had forgotten the Lord, followed their own ways, and brought upon themselves disappointment and perplexity and distress, yet the Lord has not forsaken them. They have deserved it, it is true. But God is not like man. He knows the wanderings of His sheep, and has compassion upon their infirmities. They have returned from their night of toil. Their nets are empty. They are weary and hungry and perplexed. But Jesus is on the shore. It is the hour of nature's extremity, but God is there. They have sown and reaped the bitter fruits of their own ways, but the Lord is there. They have forgotten Him, but He has not forgotten them. They have forsaken Him, but He has not forsaken them. The shore is reached. The nets are thrown aside. Despair is depicted on each countenance. Then Jesus speaks, " Children, have ye any meat ? "

Blessed be God for this precious truth ! We are like this poor band of fishermen. We are continually bent on carrying out our own wills. We are continually doing things without consulting God. We are daily making mistakes, daily turning our backs on our best friend. Our life is simply a history of mistakes and wanderings and sins. Oh, who among God's people does not feel this ! Yet, blessed be His holy name, He is not long away

from our side, only so long as to make us feel our sins and follies, that we may trust ourselves less, and Him more. Our history in all these things is sad enough, but it has the silver lining—"When the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore." What a picture of daily provocations is ours! What daily sins and crookedness and shortcomings! What a course of wandering from God! "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity," O Lord, who amongst us could stand! But blessed be Thy holy name for ever, after each dark night of mistake and wandering and sin, we come back, and find Jesus on the shore. His love and faithfulness has brought Him there in the hour of our extremity, despite it all. Each night of toil on the dark waters of mistake and sin has a shore on which Jesus stands, ever ready to help and to save. What a Saviour is ours! What marvellous love! What tender pity! What deep compassion! What never-failing faithfulness! Oh, who would not trust Him! Lord, give us hearts to lean on Thee, to rest on Thy bosom, to dwell in Thy love!

"But the disciples knew not that it was Jesus." This is our history on earth. God comes at the end of all our sins and mistakes with a blessing, but He *hides* Himself. We see Him not. He makes Himself known through His actings. We neither see Him nor expect Him at *this* point in our history. Conscience accuses. We have wan-

dered and sinned. We dare not expect Him now. If we had not so wandered, we might have expected Him to draw near and bless us ; but now we *cannot*, we *dare* not. The thought never enters our minds. Never did the disciples expect the Saviour less than at this moment. So with us. But Jesus *was* there. What brought Him ? Not their faith, but their *sins*. What brought Him ? Not their consistency of conduct, but their *deep needs*. What brought Him there ? His own *love* ! His own marvellous compassion and grace ! Nothing else.

But they did not know Him. There was a cloud about their souls, brought on them by their own wandering. God hides Himself, but with a hand full of blessing and grace. Just now the cloud will pass, and *they shall see their God through the blessing He leaves behind Him*. At present, though He is at their side, they see Him not. He is the last One in the world they expect. When Jesus stood at Mary's side, she thought it was the gardener—the one who had taken Him away. Her sorrow was at its height. But it was her own dear Saviour ! When the disciples were in the upper room, and the Saviour appeared, they thought it was a spirit, and were "terrified." But it was Jesus ! When the disciples were overtaken by the storm, and He drew nigh, they thought all was over, and that a messenger had come from the spirit-world to swallow them up ! But it was Jesus.

So with us. Our failings and infirmities, our mistakes and sins, bring a cloud with them that hides us from God. We come to some point of extremity in our life. Darkness—thick darkness, is around us. The critical moment approaches—the climax—and we give up all hope. But Jesus is in the cloud. Not a *spirit*, but a loving, gracious Saviour. We know not that it is Jesus. Let us wait a little. We *shall* know Him when the cloud passes. We shall see our God *by the blessing He has left behind Him*. Yes, we can see Him *now*. We can look back on our earthly path, and trace one event after another, and see His hand in them. We can raise our Ebenezers on some of the darkest spots in our earthly pilgrimage. We can bless Him now *most of all* for what at the time we thought was a spirit come to swallow us up. Now we *see* it was Jesus. We know Him, just as the disciples knew Him here, by the blessing He left behind Him—by the great draught of fishes they took. Let us trust Him! He is *always* the same.

“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace ;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.”

“The disciples knew not that it was Jesus.”
Nor was it necessary. He knew *them*, and there lay their safety, their blessing. He knew *them*—

their sins, their needs, their disappointment, their fruitless night of toil. He knew *all* ; and He was there. Yes, *He* was there—their loving, gracious, all-sufficient Saviour. *He* was there—was not that enough? Surely it was. His presence was the sure and certain pledge of every blessing. In His presence is fulness of joy. In His presence the disciple shall not be weary nor hungry, disappointed nor cast down. Precious Saviour! Blessed be Thy holy name for ever, for Thy love, Thy mercy, Thy continued faithfulness, to poor, needy sinners such as we are!

“Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No.” We may notice another truth taught us here. God speaks to man’s soul through his wants. It is our daily needs that bring us into contact with Him. These are the points of vital contact between the soul and God. Through these He meets the soul with the riches of His redeeming grace, and thus brings us to see and feel that He is the “God of *all* grace.” Not only is the soul’s conscious need the *first* point of vital contact with God. These needs are the meeting-places between the soul and God, through which He is *daily* speaking to us, *daily* opening up the riches of His grace and love, His tenderness and wisdom. Oh, what precious points of contact with the Lord Jesus are these needs! How we come through them to realise the fulness, the all-

sufficiency of Christ! How they make us *know* Him! This is the truth brought before us in these words of the Lord Jesus—"Children, have ye any *meat*?" This was what they had been toiling all the night for. They had returned home empty and *hungry*. "Meat" was their need, and through it the Saviour speaks to their hearts. Through it He reveals to them His fulness and all-sufficiency. "Children, have ye any *meat*?" brought from their hearts what it ever brings from the heart of God's child—the confession of emptiness and poverty. "They answered Him, No." He knew their poverty. He knew their need. The question was not put that He might know it, but that through it He might draw their attention to Him as the all-sufficient One. This is what God is always doing. We are all—sinners and saints—needy creatures. These needs of man are not accidents; they come not from second causes; they are not the result of capricious nature. No. They come to us as everything does, through a chain of second causes, apparently by accident, by circumstances over which we have no control; and so we allow them to pass over, supposing they are unguided results. They are second causes only as the hunger of these disciples was after their night of fruitless toil. But these second causes create *needs* in man's heart. God sends them for this very purpose, and that, through these needs, He may approach the soul,

and reveal Himself to it as the great Supplier. It is in this way God is speaking to every man living in every event of life. The lover of pleasure and sin, at some moment unexpected, when the flush and excitement of the draught are over, comes to reflect. He feels for a moment that the cup does not satisfy him. For the time it was sweet, but now he feels it was not enough. He wants something of a more permanently satisfying nature. There is the need. It has been created by a chain of second causes. It is no *chance* creation. An unerring Guide has been directing these second causes, in order to create this very want, that through it He may approach the soul. He speaks, "Child, hast thou any *meat*?" He speaks, but man hears not His voice. So strongly are second causes twined round his soul, so strongly is practical infidelity the element in which he lives, that he is deaf to God's voice. And though God follows him hour after hour in amazing mercy, creating fresh needs, and again approaching his soul through them, and whispering, "Child, hast thou any *meat*?" he hears not God's voice. Still God follows him in wondrous mercy, sending *deeper* needs—needs that inflict wounds in his soul, and bring forth hot, scalding tears from his eyes, and in a louder, clearer tone, whispers, "Child, hast thou any *meat*?" And yet he hears not. Thus man lives on. Thus he dies—the life-long subject of a

discipline from the hand of God to which he has been blind. Thus he dies, with a long, dark shadow behind him, stretching through years, of mercies and judgments, creating deep needs in his soul, and all lost, all guiltily trodden under foot. These are his witnesses, which he himself in his life-time has called forth to the bar of God to condemn him. And that condemnation *must* be a righteous, a holy, a just one.

The Lord now proceeds to manifest Himself. "And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." The Lord was about to pour out a blessing; but before doing so He tries their faith. The trial of faith is generally the forerunner of blessing. But what a command this was! Nature would have said, "What difference is there between the right side of the ship and the left? What a foolish command! Here we are, weary, disappointed, hungry; we have toiled all the night, and He says to us, 'Cast the net on the right side of the ship!'" So they might not unreasonably have argued. God tries our faith by something the natural mind would consider foolish. Ah! "the wisdom of God is foolishness with men." Will the disciples reason or obey? Will they, like Naaman of old, say, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the rivers of Israel?" or will they obey the word of the Lord? This was the turning-

point in their history. Blessing or no blessing hung upon it. Another historian tells us what they did on a similar occasion. "Peter saith unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless, at Thy word I will let down the net." What a precious resolve, "Nevertheless, at Thy word!" Everything is against us, "nevertheless, at Thy word I will." It *seems* a foolish command, "nevertheless, at Thy word I will." It seems to be mocking us in this hour of trial and hunger, "nevertheless, at Thy word I will." Here is faith, in spite of all appearances, casting itself upon God. Here is faith, with everything against it, resolving to act in *obedience* to the Lord's word. Precious faith! How God is glorified in it!

"They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." Obedience is *always* the forerunner of blessing. To every step God increases faith and strength and power. And the more the soul acts on His simple word, in the face of improbabilities and impossibilities, the more He is glorified.

"They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." The disciples *might* have thought that somehow or other the Saviour would provide for them. They might have calculated on His uniform love to meet their necessities in this hour of trial. But *could* they

have expected so large a blessing? Could they have thought for a moment that such an overflowing supply was at hand? Could they have conceived the blessing that hung upon obedience to that word, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship?" Never! Ah! when God gives us a blessing, it is a blessing worthy of Himself, a *Godlike* blessing. See what awaits the faith that trusts in spite of all improbabilities! See what a blessing follows simple obedience to God and His word! "Now they were not able to draw it for the *multitude* of fishes." O child of God, trust Him! See what He would have you do, and *do* it, though everything is against you. Faith shall gain the victory. Obedience shall gain the blessing. Taking this verse in connection with the eleventh, we see how God rewards those who trust His word and obey it. "Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, *full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three.*"

One particular word in this verse must not be passed over. It shines like the bow in the dark cloud. "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." It seemed useless. Disappointment was depicted on the countenance, and a command of such a kind was tantalising. Everything was very dark. But there was one precious word on which faith could lean, even at this trying moment. "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and

ye *shall* find." "Ye *shall*." What an assurance ! It was the word of Him who cannot lie. It was the assurance of One who has said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away. Could they trust it? Could they venture on it? Yes, they did. "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless, at Thy word *I will* let down the net." In the midst of the darkest paths, God gives the soul a promise—"ye *shall* find." This is the silver lining to the dark cloud. There is no cloud without it. Reader, if God calls you to walk in darkness, He gives you a "*shall*," a sure and certain promise for your soul to lean upon. May you lean upon it unreservedly, and then you will experience its comfort, and soon also its faithfulness, in a glorious fulfilment. "He is faithful that promised."

"Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord." We have in this verse two distinct types of Christians. Here is John—the one whose heart is full of Christ's love—calm, reflective, and meditative—the one who most quickly recognises the Saviour, by sitting, like Mary, at His feet. There is Peter also, a true believer, but full of zeal and impetuosity, and ready to plunge into the deep to do honour to his Lord. Both are doing the Lord's work. Both shall receive His reward. But, dear reader, in this day of excitement and impetuosity, may our character be the happy

blending of the two. May we have the first, that it may lead to the second. May we sit at the feet of Jesus, and go forward from that sweet spot full of zeal to do the Lord's work, "walking in the Spirit," and "led of the Spirit."

But who was it that first discovered the Saviour? The one who was *near to Jesus, leaned on His bosom, dwelt in His love*. Reader, remember this. If you want to discern quickly your Saviour's image, wherever it is to be seen, if you want to see most clearly the Lord's mind, the Lord's ways, the Lord's presence, you must live near to Him, lean on His bosom, dwell in His love. Christians are not spiritually quick-sighted, because they are not living near to Jesus, and leaning on Him. All spiritual dulness, all cloudiness of soul, proceeds from the want of this. And one feature marks this disciple here—he never mentions *his own* name. The soul that lives near to Jesus, and leans on His bosom, will be always *hiding itself* in Him. If it has to appear at all, it will appear in this way—"the disciple whom Jesus loved." He calls our attention to him only as hidden under the love of Jesus. Reader, live near, *very* near. Lean on Him. Then will you too delight to hide yourself in the cleft of the Rock of ages.

"Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net

broken." "The net was not broken." It was very weak—made by the hands of a few poor fishermen, yet it held this great draught. When God sends a blessing, He prepares the vessel to hold it. The cords of that net would have broken under other circumstances. But God prepares both—the treasure and the vessel; and when He makes strong, what weakness can there be? There may be many a spiritual net now cast in faith and prayer into the great deep of this world's sea, which shall bring up a great draught. There may be many a poor weak servant of Christ now going forth, into whose soul the Lord may pour a large blessing, to overflow into the bosom of others. The cords may be those of a weak body, a trembling heart; but "in weakness we are made strong." God has prepared the net for the blessing, and it shall not burst. We marvel to see how often God's richest blessings are carried in *very frail nets*. We marvel to see the vessels "earthen" ones, and not gold or silver. Ah! it is thus the glory of Christ shines forth. "The excellency of the power" is *seen* to be "not of us," but of Him. Let us not wonder. Let us not tremble and fear lest our feeble nets should burst under the weight of His glory. No; He has prepared them: and "yet, for all there are so many, the nets shall not be broken." Let us trust Him, and go forward. Our faith, our prayers, our desires, our efforts, our servants in the work, our machinery

employed in carrying it on,—all may be nets very frail; but *God* has prepared them: and the nets He has prepared, be they ever so weak, shall not burst. Precious truth! Strong consolation for our weak faith and trembling hearts!

“Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine.” This is instructive. The Lord was about to administer a gentle reproof to Peter for having three times denied Him. He does it *very gently*, and *indirectly* too, by three times asking, “Lovest thou me?” He does not even *mention* his sin. He only *indirectly reminds* him of it. But before doing even this, He says, “Come and dine.” In reminding him of his fault He disabuses the mind of Peter of any thought of unkindness towards him by inviting him to *the social feast*. Not pointing out *the fault first*, but winning the heart. If, dear reader, we want to *gain the soul*, we must first *win the heart*. Then, having precluded the idea of unkindness by His invitation, and thus *prepared the ground*, He proceeds to the work of faithful but loving reproof. O reader, what an example for you and me! May God give us grace to follow it! Do you want to warn, rebuke, reprove? *Win the heart first!* Show by *words* and *deeds* that you *love* the man. Then you may proceed. Then you will have prepared the ground for the seed. But not even then fully. Something more, even yet. Study the *gentlest* way of doing it. Rather be indirect than pointed.

Rather *remind* than openly *point out*. Oh, be like Jesus! See Him at the well of Sychar. See Him, after a journey of forty miles, fling Himself jaded and tired at the well's mouth. Mark the dust on His sandals, and the sweat on His brow. Mark the ignorance and blindness, the tantalising stupidity—for such the flesh would call it—of this woman. See how utterly incapable of comprehending His plainest words! Yet not a frown is on His brow. Not a word of reproach escapes His lips. He follows her *down into the lowest depths* of her blindness and ignorance and sin, without a check or word of rebuke. And why? Just to *win her soul*. Oh, as we look at these cases, we may well exclaim, was ever gentleness like His? Was ever tenderness like Christ's? Was ever love, dear Lord, like Thine? But, reader, He "left us an example that we should follow His steps." Let us look at Jesus and do likewise.

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me *more than these*? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs." How gently the Saviour by this thrice-repeated question brought home to Peter's conscience his sin. And, having touched the conscience, no further allusion is made to the matter. It teaches us the lesson, that *to touch the conscience* should be our aim at all times; and that this having

been accomplished, no after-allusion should be made to the sin we have, by God's blessing, brought home to it. The poor sinner should not sink in our estimation, should not be one shade less in that estimation than he was before. We should *forget* as well as *forgive*. The conscience touched so as to bring it to its true state before God, touched gently, touched indirectly, touched by reminding rather than by pointing out, touched after we have gained the heart—this is God's way of dealing with the poor wanderer. O reader, may you and I have grace to go and do likewise. It is not in this way the wanderer is generally dealt with. Why? Because there is so little of the mind of Jesus in us. Let us ask for this; and when an occasion presents itself—as it surely will if we are faithful to our brother in not allowing sin on him—let us follow our blessed Master's example, so shall we win that soul and not lose our reward.

But what agitation must have been going on, at this moment, in Peter's mind. How his transparent character shows itself and betrays the agitation within. How plainly he shows us that his conscience was touched! "*Lovest thou me more than these?*" our Lord says. Peter does not answer the question. He simply replies, "Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Did the Saviour ever doubt Peter's love to Him? Never. Peter's conscience was touched, and he

evades the real point of the question—"more than these." Of course he loved the Saviour. But after his third denial, after his lies and oaths, how *could* he say, "Yea, Lord; Thou knowest I love Thee *more than these?*" He could not. He dared not. Conscience was stung to the quick. He bowed his head in the dust. His eye quailed before the gentle, loving look of the Master. Yet with all his past sins, with all his perfidy and treachery, brought on in an unguarded hour, with all his boasting and self-confidence full in view, he *could* say, he *would* say, dark as the picture was that now hung before his conscience, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; *Thou knowest* that I love Thee." With a black scroll spread out before him he could yet look up into the face of God, and with a flood of Omnipotent light penetrating his heart through and through, exclaim, with sincerity and truth, "Lord, Thou knowest *all* things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." He seems to say, "After my past base ingratitude and guilty conduct, I dare not, I cannot, I will not say I love Thee more than these; but, Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest this poor heart of mine, Thou knowest its every secret, and that it is with no guile, no feigned lips, I say it, Thou knowest all things, Lord, Thou knowest I love Thee." Reader, can you say the same? It may be that, like poor Peter, you look back on a lifetime of base ingratitude; on a past history, every

leaf of which is written in dark characters of crime and sin ; it may be that conscience, appalled by the Almighty's searching gaze, shrinks back and hides itself in the dust ; it may be that there is not *one* bright spot in your past history, not one redeeming feature to the dark vision that hovers in your path ; but with all this, can you look up into the face of God with a tearful eye, but with a true heart, and say, "Lord, Thou knowest *all* things ; Thou knowest that I love Thee ?" God's voice is calling to you from heaven. It is calling you *by name*. It asks *you* to substitute *your own name* for that of "Simon" in this passage. It asks you this solemn question, "Lovest thou me ?" Dear reader, earnestly do I entreat you—*before you read one line further of this book*—to close your eyes, look up into the face of God, and give an honest answer to His question, "*Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ?*"

"This spake He, signifying by what death He should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, *seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved, following*, which also leaned on His breast at supper." Peter needs a command to follow Christ, needs that command to be repeated. But the disciple who was living near to Jesus, leaning on His bosom, dwelling in His love, is seen following Jesus *without any command*. It was not that this disciple did not *need* the command ; he *outstripped* it.

He saw the Lord's *mind*, and followed it. Peter, not living so near to Jesus, saw not this, and needed a command; nay, could not follow without it. There are these two classes of Christians all around us. One, like Peter, is a true disciple, but *walking at a distance* from God. He gets into difficulties and wrong paths, is perplexed, and cannot move without a *plain command* from God's word. Not finding it, he cannot move; or if he moves, it is in a wrong direction. Another Christian, like John, living near to the Lord, gets into *the same* trying paths as the other. His guide, however, in every path, is not the *letter* only of the word, but the *spirit* of it. He knows that if he were to be guided only by its *letter*, that word must constantly fail him. He looks at God's *mind*. He knows the *spirit* of that word. He is living near to Jesus. Therefore he is *never* at a loss. His course, however perplexing, is one of "following" Jesus. His eye is single. He sees Christ. He presses onward in that path *that will most tend to His glory*. The world looks on and "seeth him following." Why? Because he leaned on his Saviour's bosom. He sees that Saviour before him. "To him to live is Christ; to die is gain." The other disciple is walking at a distance, and is far behind in the race. That distance has cast a shadow over his spiritual vision. He stands still or "turns himself about" in the race, dragging on a slow and imperceptible

progression, while the other is pressing rapidly on to the prize. O Lord, give each one of us to live near to Thee, to lean on Thy bosom, to hide ourselves in Thy love; so that seeing Thy mind, we too may press on to heaven!

One point more and I close. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even *the world itself could not* contain the books which *should* be written." Dear reader, this is no pious exaggeration. It is the language of every true believer. The soul that knows the preciousness of Jesus *can* say, *will* say, "No *books* can tell what *He* is to my soul. If every book the world ever penned were to be transmuted into a history of Jesus, all put together '*could not*' tell out the preciousness of His dear Name!"

"All are too mean to speak His worth,
Too mean to set the Saviour forth."

"Only before the throne, when I see Him as He is, and praise Him with unsinning heart, and with the echoes of the 'new song' falling on my enraptured spirit from 'a multitude which no man can number,' only then shall I see the fulness of His grace, the wonders of His love; only then shall I praise Him as I ought!"

Reader, can your *heart* endorse the language of this verse? If you are a child of God you can—

fully. If you cannot, you have "neither part nor lot in the matter" of a Saviour's salvation. You are still—though you may be able to do *everything else*, "dead in trespasses and sins." Awful state of soul in which to meet God! Reader, is it *thy* state?

Lord Jesus, dost Thou call me
 To give my heart to Thee?
 And dost Thou really offer
 Thine heart and love to me?
 My body, soul, and spirit,
 To Thee I freely give,
 In happy, restful union,
 With Thee henceforth to live.

And oh! that Thou should'st bid me
 Abide, dear Lord, in Thee!
 For each and every moment,
 My safety here I see.
 No foe can now come near me,
 Temptation cannot harm;
 Thy wounded side my dwelling,
 My strength Thy mighty arm.

From Thee I draw my life, Lord,
 A vine-branch in the Vine:
 Thy grace flows freely through me,
 The fruit I bear is Thine.
 The softest prayer I whisper,
 Is breathed into Thine heart;
 And more than I can ask Thee,
 Thou can'st, dear Lord, impart.

And thus in Thee abiding,
I triumph over sin ;
For now I wholly trust Thee
To keep me pure within.
I have the gladsome promise,
The fulness of my joy,
The sweetness of Thy friendship ;
Such bliss knows no alloy.

I know I shall continue
In that dear love of Thine !
I joy in Thy commandments,
Thy will, O Lord, is mine.
And so do I await Thee,
With confidence and peace,
Till Thou shalt come in glory,
And earthly conflicts cease.

VI.

*JESUS RISEN AND ASCENDING.*LUKE *xxiv.* 36-53.

THE Lord had risen from the dead. The grave had been rifled of its prey. Songs of victory were already on the lips of some to whom He had shown Himself, and their hearts burned within them as they hastened onward with the joyous news. For a brief moment the tears of the weeping Church ceased to flow. It was a moment of suspense. Awe and wonder filled every heart, for they knew not what to think. At this juncture, while assembled in the upper room in Jerusalem, and with the doors around them closed, the risen Saviour appears in their midst. It is a scene full of comfort, full of instruction, full of practical issues. Let us look at it under the guidance of God's Spirit, and may we learn His lessons.

The disciples had assembled together to hear the glad tidings brought by the two who had just returned from Emmaus. They came together to hear

of and to speak of the risen Saviour, and that Saviour came to meet them. This is our first lesson. When we come together to hear of Him or to speak of Him, He comes to meet us. It is immaterial where we meet; for where He is, every place is hallowed ground, every place is a consecrated temple. It is not the place, but the object in view, that is everything. It is not the variety and diversity of character in those who meet that is of any weight. It is Him whom they come together to meet. There were strange characters among that throng. One had only a few hours before cursed and sworn, and denied that he knew Him. Two others had been clamouring as to which should have the chief place in His kingdom. Three of them had fallen asleep in His hour of agony, when most of all He needed their sympathy. And all of them had forsaken Him and fled, when He stood alone at the cross. "Surely," men would naturally have said, "it is not *these* you are going to meet and comfort and strengthen! Why trouble yourself with such as these? They have treated you as badly as any one could have treated you. They have played the traitor and the coward at the last moment, and may do so again. Leave them to themselves." Such a course would only have been natural. Such a course man would have taken, and no doubt they deserved it. But God is not like man. God begins at the very point where man stops short. This is grace.

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end." Just at the very point where nature would exclaim, "Leave such creatures to themselves!" there grace begins. There Jesus went. There He goes still. And there all who are like Him go too. If we have any measure of grace in our hearts answering to grace in Him, we shall do as Jesus does here—go where nature would stop short. Oh that we had this grace more in us! Oh that this *trying* yet *true* test of our hearts found us in the same path! Lord Jesus, give us Thy mind, Thy Spirit, that we may turn and seek those who have injured us, forsaken us, cast us off: that we may be found with hearts full of love among those who least of all deserve it!

Yet, with all their weaknesses and failings and sins, they loved Him and came to meet Him; and when we come to meet Him, God is faithful, there He never fails to meet us. It may be we are full of failings, and look back on the past hours with shame and confusion of face; still His love fails not. He *cannot*, He *will* not, keep back from us. Nay, these things draw out His grace the more. He yearns to meet us because He sees these things in us. He longs to meet us, to cheer our hearts, to strengthen our faith, and to encourage us onward with His love. What a Saviour He is! How

every view of Him charms and cheers our hearts! Who is like Him? "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee." Let us remember this at all times, and especially when we meet together in the house of God for worship. It is not the written prayer that is the *form*, nor yet the absence of it that makes prayer worship. It is not ecclesiastical order, or unvarying services, or constantly repeated words which constitute *form*, nor yet the entire absence of them that makes worship scriptural and spiritual. Oh no! The *form* is in our own hearts, whether the place be consecrated or otherwise, whether the prayer be written or extempore, whether the words be constantly changed or continually repeated. The form—we repeat it—is in ourselves, not in any of these things. Let us not make these things the occasion of difference, nor yet excuses for our own want of spiritual life and power. The fault is within, not without. Only let us come with a single eye to meet Jesus, and we shall surely find Him, whether in a cathedral or in an upper room, whether under a written form of prayer or an extempore one. Oh that we had a single eye to meet Jesus—Jesus only! What a change would there then be in cathedrals and churches and chapels! What blessings on our services! What spiritual worship from our worshippers! It is the going to meet Jesus that makes

all right. It is going to church or to chapel as simply *treading a beaten path* that makes all wrong. Let us go with Christ in our hearts to meet Christ in His house; and then all things will become new.

And let us mark how the wondrous grace of the Lord Jesus is further shown in this narrative. "And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, Peace be unto you." He came to meet these weak ones, bringing with Him the message He always brings wherever He goes,—peace. They who come together with a loving heart and a single eye to meet Him, receive from Him that deep peace which He only can give and which passeth all understanding.

But though He comes Himself to the heart with this precious message, how strangely He is received! What weaknesses and infirmities and unbelief; what a tumult of agitation and doubt and fear, meet Him at His very first approach! How little to encourage, how much to drive Him away! What unpreparedness to meet Him! What hearts we have when Jesus draws near to us! What dishonour we do to His grace! What doubts of His love and even of His very person! How we look through our own fears at Him, and transmute the very essence of all love and grace and mercy into an angry being,—a dark spirit come expressly from

the spirit-world to swallow us up! "But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." Alas! when grace comes in the person of the Lord Jesus to the heart, such is the unvarying reception it meets with! Our hearts are always the same. They can give nothing else.

And does He, driven by our unkindness and sin, retire? Does He leave us to ourselves, as we deserve to be left? Ah no! He only draws the nearer. What wondrous grace! "And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." How He lingers round our darkness and sin! How He presses Himself upon us! How He draws nearer and nearer, gently expostulating, meekly bearing with our fears and unbelief! "Come nearer to me; prove me that it is I myself!" Thus does He banish our fears, dispel our sadness, and win our souls. Only one thing can do this. Not doctrines, not knowledge, not sermons. No; the heart's deep maladies can be met by none of these. Religion itself is valueless here. We want a living person, a beating heart, a loving bosom, on which to cast ourselves. It must be Jesus Himself drawing very near,—Jesus only, speaking His own word as He only can speak it. Man needs only this, but

nothing short of this. Now and for ever our motto must be, "Jesus Himself, Jesus only."

And does He stop here? Surely grace and love have stooped low enough! Nay, not the grace and love of *Jesus*! He stoops lower still. "And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and of an honeycomb. And He took it and did eat before them." Truly no human thought can conceive, no human tongue can tell, the depths to which the grace and love of Heaven will descend to win the wanderer, to seek and save the lost! God Himself, in the person of His dear Son, can travel forty miles across the desert with the dust on His sandals and the sweat on His brow, and fling Himself, jaded and weary, at the well of Sychar to win a sinner's heart! He can become a debtor to that heart for a drink of water, if only He may gain it; and then, afterwards, in the joy that He has won it, forget the draught, the water, and the well! And the exhibition of grace in the narrative we are now considering falls not a whit behind this. The good Shepherd goes forward in His heavenly path, seeking the wandering sheep. He finds this band like the lost sheep in the wilderness. He finds them in agitation and doubt, in fear and unbelief. Surely they are the strayed sheep! And now the good Shepherd has found them, how He stoops down

and gently lays them on His shoulders,—“Why are ye troubled?” “Behold my hands and my feet;” “handle me and see;” and lastly He takes their broiled fish and honeycomb and eats “before them.” *Could* grace and love stoop lower? *Could* heaven present us with a sweeter picture of the wondrous love of Jesus? Sinner, will not such a picture win *thine* heart? Will it not banish all *thy* fears? Will it not woo and win *thee* to His feet, to drink in deep draughts of love from the ocean fulness that is in Him. Oh, gaze on it; and if thou hast ever doubted, or had hard thoughts before, never doubt again.

And now joy and wonder enter. Now the good Shepherd lifts the weak ones in His arms, and placing them in His bosom, carries them across the desert, safe to His everlasting fold. Let us turn and gaze for a moment longer on this beauteous picture, and see how it applies to ourselves.

When Jesus comes to us, He finds the same thing as He found when He came to these. What varieties of temperament and constitution has the truth to contend with, before it can find an entrance into the heart! What fears and anxieties, what clouds and darkness, morally, physically, and spiritually! One is too sanguine, and looks too much on the bright side, another labours under continual gloom and depression. One is excitable, another phlegmatic and dull. One labours under some

continual nervous irritation, starts at every shadow, and is scared by every cloud. One is continually doubting and fearing, and can believe nothing without the plainest and most palpable evidence ; while another, too credulous, takes up everything without a show of evidence. One is irritable, sensitive, and morbidly quick to feel ; another is cold, callous, almost stoical. Oh what a variety of character has the Lord to contend with when He approaches the heart with His messages of love and mercy ! Yet He lingers fondly round us, bears month after month, year after year, with all our failings and infirmities. They *are* infirmities, and He knows it. He is touched with a feeling of each one. He is never wearied. His love is never exhausted. He presses Himself upon us again and again. He comes nearer, and says, " Handle me and see. Come nearer to my side. Behold the evidences of my love to thee, poor, doubting soul ! See the marks in my hands and side ! See how I have loved thee ! Gaze upon that rude and crimson cross, and there read what I did for thee." " He that spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things ? " Poor, anxious, troubled one ! Shrink not back from Jesus ! Say not, He will charge me with my sins. Say not, His wrath is over me. Tremble not with fear and dread. Draw near to Him. Handle Him, and see that it is

Jesus, thy friend and brother, the One who loved thee and gave Himself for thee. It is no dark being from the spirit-world come to swallow thee up. It is thy best-beloved ; the One who has so often stood near thee in sorrow's dark hour, stilled the troubled waves to rest, and hushed the storm around thee ! It is the One who has encompassed thy path with loving-kindness and tender mercies ; who has turned aside the blow, that it might not fall upon thee, and whispered, in the midst of thy troubles, " Peace, be still." It is Jesus, thine own dear, tried, precious Saviour. Oh trembling, doubting one, lean on that tender, all-sympathising bosom. Lean on His exhaustless love, and be at rest.

And let us mark God's way of restoring peace to the agitated, doubting heart. " Behold my hands and my feet," are the first words He utters to bring them to a right state of mind. Yes ! it is to His wounded hands and bruised feet, that now, as then, He points the troubled one. Have we doubts of His love ? " Behold my hands and my feet," He cries still. Are we agitated, filled with fears because of our sins, cast down because of our past treatment of Him and His love to us ? Yet hear Him say, " Behold my hands and my feet." " See my love to thee, poor burdened one ! Gaze on that cross on which I died for thee, and let all thy fears and doubts be at rest." Do deep thoughts sometimes

flash like electric light through our souls, of our great unworthiness, of our past life of shame and neglect, of the holiness and majesty of that God against whom we have sinned, and to whom we must one day give account; and do risings of fear and dread, misery and agony, make us shrink and tremble? See Him standing, as of old, before the door of our hearts, and whispering, "Behold my hands and my feet. See all thy sin put away; see all thine iniquity forgiven; see all thy wrath borne; see all my love in these spear-marks and bruises—my love to *thee*, poor, troubled one. '*Handle* me, and see,' and let joy fill the aching crevices of thy soul." Are we doubtful of our strength, fainting under the pressure of earthly trial, anxiously asking, "How will to-morrow's need be supplied?" or "How shall I bear that heavy cross, or breast that swelling flood, or brave that storm, now looming in the distance?" See Jesus at thy very side! See Him before thine own heart, showing thee the print of the nails and the gash in His side, and whispering, "*Behold* my hands and my feet; *handle* me and see," for the dark spirit of the troubled heart is closing your eyes to my love and grace, my sympathy, compassion, and tenderness." "He that spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"—strength for every day; light in every dark hour; joy in every trouble; victory in every conflict,—yea, *all* things.

"My God shall supply *all* your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." What a pillow for the weary head! What a resting-place for the anxious heart!

The Saviour closes His work of comforting His people and strengthening their faith with the *Scriptures*. "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." He thus shows us, that however various may be the ways in which we approach the heart, to comfort and strengthen it, we are never to lose sight of the most effective means—the word of God. Let us use what ways we please in approaching man as wisdom and judgment may suggest, only let them never be severed from the word of God, by which alone they can be sanctified and made a blessing to the soul. Jesus Himself, Jesus only, brought home to the heart through the written word of God, was the remedy, and the only remedy He Himself used to meet men's varied cases in the chapter we have been considering, and in every other case recorded in the Bible. If, then, these were the means used by the Lord Himself, let us not, in our conceit and folly, try to use some other, as if we knew better than He. Jesus and His word—this is heaven's own and only remedy for man, whatever his case may be.

And now, from viewing the Saviour's grace and love to *His own*, let us follow Him, and see what are His thoughts to the world. "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at *Jerusalem*." We have before alluded to grace beginning where nature stops short, and have seen it manifested in the Lord's conduct in this narrative. See here exactly the same principle exercised towards the *world*—"beginning at *Jerusalem*." What place was *first* in His thoughts of love and mercy? That which would have been *last* in nature's thought, even if it could have found a place at all—*Jerusalem*. Yes; if we are like Jesus, we shall always *begin* with Jerusalem, whether in carrying the Gospel to sinners, or in our conduct towards each other. We shall begin where the heart would *naturally* stop short. This is grace as it was in Jesus, and if we have any measure of likeness to Him, this must show itself. "What?" men would have said, "begin with those who murdered you, with those who refused to listen to your words, trampled your messages under their feet, planned and plotted from morning till night to kill you!—go to these, and *first*!" Yes, sinner, dark in guilt as the blood-red hands of Jerusalem's murderers, of thee God is thinking. Thou art in God's heart of love; not only in it, but *first* in it. Oh, what a message of mercy to thy hell-deserving soul! Let

Satan paint thy past life in the dark lines of the murderers of the Son of God, still there is mercy for thee; yes, mercy overflowing! His first message is to thee, *Jerusalem sinner!* And what is that? Pardon of all thy sin,—“repentance and remission of sins, beginning at Jerusalem!” Oh come to Jesus! Come, sinner, come! Surely He Himself is calling thee! Listen again to the wondrous words—“*remission of sins, beginning at Jerusalem.*” This is the brightest picture of grace! It can soar no higher! It can descend no greater depths! Come, sinner, *come!*

And now He is about to leave them. He gives them directions to go and tarry in Jerusalem till the promise of the Father is sent. “And behold I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem till ye be endued with power from on high.” The position in which the Lord places them here is significant, and shows us how He deals with all His people. A great blessing is about to be vouchsafed from heaven. Before receiving it, however, He places His people in the attitude of faith and expectation, in patient *waiting*, in *obedience* to His command, and in the midst of their *foes*. Is not this the way in which God deals with every soul? A blessing from above is promised. Our course in relation to this is *faith in the promise, obedience to the command, and patient waiting on God for its fulfilment*, in the

midst of a world of sin. Surely we wait for a blessing. Surely we know "God is faithful," and that "not one good thing of all the Lord our God has promised us" shall be lacking. What should be our attitude now? Faith, obedience, patience. Oh, may we be found in this state always; faithful, obedient, patient; praying, watching, working, till the Lord shall send for us!

And now we approach the interesting narrative of our Lord's ascension. "And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." We have a beautiful commentary on these words in Leviticus ix. 22, 23. When the high-priest was about to enter the tabernacle of old, he lifted up his hands and blessed the people, and in this attitude he passed within. Afterwards, when all the priestly work was over, and he again emerged from the tabernacle, it was with uplifted hands, blessing the people; and then, we are told, "*the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people.*"

We have in this narrative a partial and beautiful fulfilment of that of which this was a type. Jesus, the great High Priest, is now about to enter the tabernacle. He is lifting up His hands in blessing, and in this attitude He passes from their sight within the veil. In a little while, when all the priestly work is over, that same High Priest shall

again come forth "in the same manner as ye have seen Him go away"—with uplifted hands blessing His people. Then "*the glory of the Lord shall appear to all the people*;" "all flesh shall see the salvation of God;" "all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest;" "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

"He was *parted* from them." What an expressive word! It reminds us of a family scene. A loved one is about to leave the family hearth. He lingers fondly over the precious treasures he is about to leave. The hour draws near. The time is up. A gentle touch reminds him that he must stay no longer. Still he lingers. And now loving hands have to lay hold of him and separate him from the fond ties round which his heart-strings are entwined. Thus he is "*parted*."

Just so here. Jesus lingers round the hearts that had loved and followed him. Lovingly He bends over them with uplifted hands. And now the time for separation has come. Still He lingers. Angel hands descend from heaven and "part" Him from them; and the last glimpse they catch, as the cloud carries Him upward, are the outstretched hands of blessing—an emblem of the attitude He was ever to retain towards them while hidden from their view, till He should come again and receive them to Himself.

And what effect had all this upon His people?

"And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." They had seen Jesus. He had revealed Himself to them in a gracious, loving manner. This sight produced "worship," "praise," and "blessing." All true worship springs from the same source. It is simply Jesus manifesting Himself to the soul through the written word. Then worship, praise, blessing, *must* follow. But where the heart sees not Jesus, all worship must be a *form*, a dead letter.

"They returned to *Jerusalem* with great joy." How wonderful! If, when our Lord had said to them only a short time before, "I go my way to Him that sent me," and when their hearts were full of sorrow at the thought, some one had whispered, "A day is at hand when you will rejoice at His going away," could they have believed it? They would have said, "Impossible! that can never be." Yet that day *did* come. They returned to Jerusalem not only with "joy," but with "*great* joy." And what do we learn from this? That God gives us strength for our need: "*As* thy days so shall thy strength be." Not *before* your day; not *beyond* your day; but *as* your day. When the hour of trial comes, God will give the needful strength for it. Then, dear Christian reader, look not at the *futura*. Leave that with God. God comes with every extremity. Only trust Him. Think not of *to-morrow*. To-

morrow's need will *surely* bring with it to-morrow's God. Trust and be still. "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." Oh, trust Him, trust Him! When the hour approaches that now gives you so much anxiety, so much dread, all shall flee away, and you shall pass through it with "joy," yea, with "*great joy*." Trust, oh trust that precious Saviour, and be at peace!

They "returned to *Jerusalem* with great joy." One would have supposed that was the last place in the world they would have gone to. There their Master had been murdered. There His testimony and theirs had been continually rejected. There their lives had been in continual jeopardy. Persecution, insult, calumny, and reproach had been heaped upon them on every side. And yet to *this* place and to *these* people they now hasten, with "great joy" filling their hearts! What was the great secret? Ah! they had seen Jesus. His love filled their hearts. His word was "burning" within them. Hence the result. With the love of Jesus burning within, we can go anywhere. His love can make us overleap every barrier, and scatter difficulties of mountain height to the winds. This is what we want now—Jesu's love filling every niche within. What can stand before it? Nothing! It is omnipotent!

Do we want God's work revived, souls saved, saints comforted, and all God's people to become "*witnesses* of these things"—lights bright and clear, cities set on the hill that cannot be hid? Oh, then, let the hearts of ministers, of people, be filled with the love of Jesus. This will send us right joyfully to any Jerusalem with the message of God on our lips. This will send us with alacrity into the dens of iniquity and sin, wherever they are to be found. This will bring us souls to Christ and magnify His name.

"And they were continually in the temple blessing and praising God." Here the chapter closes. O reader, is this the close of each chapter of our spiritual life? Does each hour, each day, find us in the presence of God, with hearts filled with the love of Jesus, and our lips filled with His praise? Does each act of life find us here? Does the world *see* us here? O God, grant that when the chapter of our earthly life closes, whether that life be long or short, it may close upon us as this chapter closes upon the disciples here, with the love of Jesus shining brightly in our souls, and the praises of Jesus on our tongues! Reader, be this thy portion *now*, and whenever the Lord may send for thee, for Jesus Christ's sake!

O Jesus! Friend unfailing!
How dear art Thou to me!

Are cares or fears assailing ?
I find my strength in Thee.
Why should my feet grow weary
Of this my pilgrim way ?
Rough though the path and dreary,
It ends in perfect day.

Nought, nought I court as pleasure,
Compared, O Christ, with Thee !
Thy sorrow without measure
Earned peace and joy for me !
I love to own, Lord Jesus !
Thy claims o'er me Divine ;
Bought with Thy blood most precious,
Whose can I be but Thine ?

What fills my heart with gladness ?
'Tis Thy abounding grace.
Where can I look, in sadness,
But, Jesus, on Thy face ?
My all is Thy providing—
Thy love can ne'er grow cold ;
In Thee, my Refuge, hiding—
No good wilt Thou withhold.

Why should I droop in sorrow ?
Thou'rt ever by my side.
Why trembling dread the morrow ?
What ill can e'er betide ?
If I my cross have taken,
'Tis but to follow Thee ;
If scorned, despised, forsaken,
Nought severs Thee from me.

O worldly pomp and glory,
Your charms are spread in vain !
I've heard a sweeter story !
I've found a truer gain !
Where Christ a place prepareth,
There is my loved abode ;
There shall I gaze on Jesus !
There shall I dwell with God !

THE END.

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